# Where The Tides Meet

By

Edward Payson Berry

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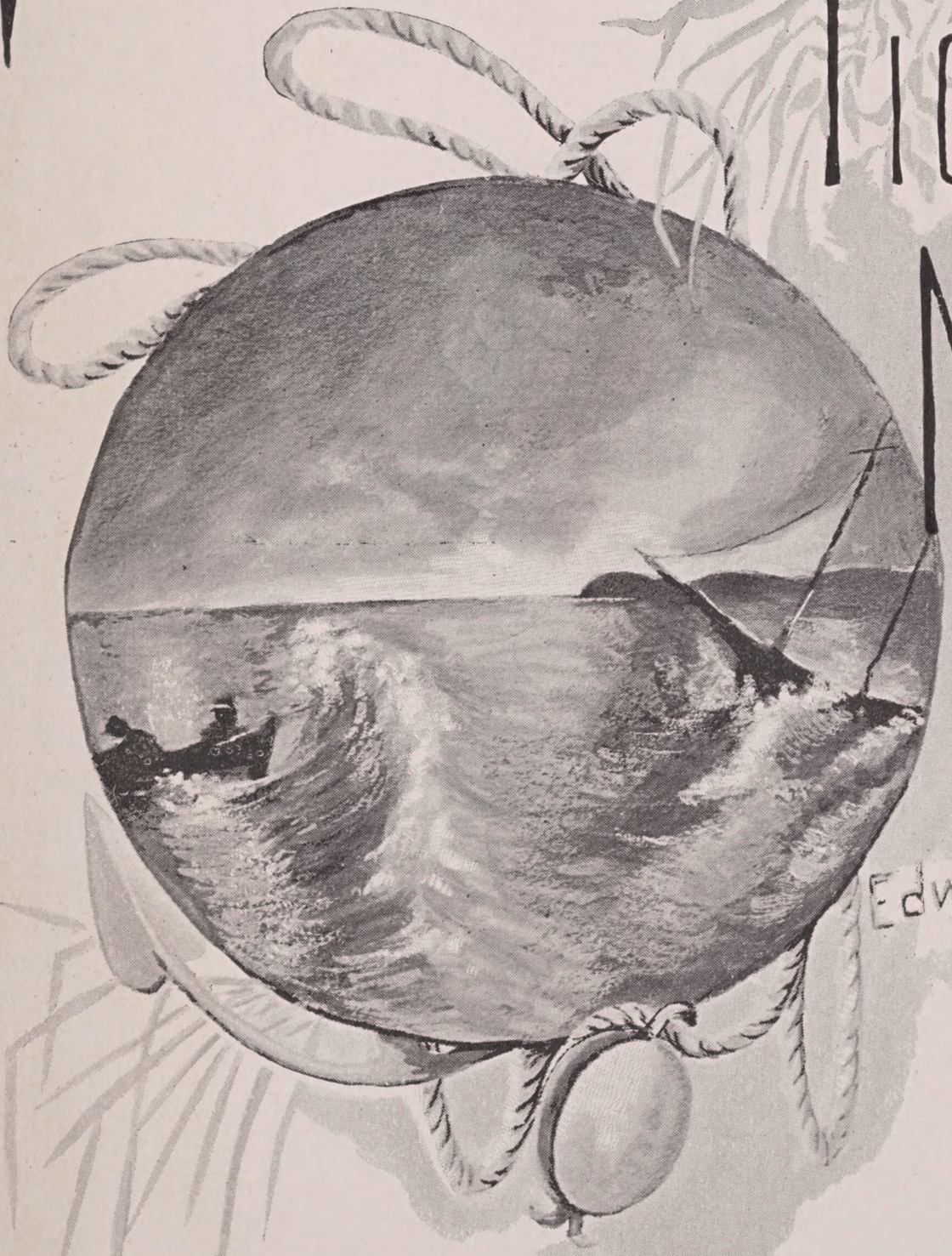
# Where the Tides Meet



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# WHERE THE TIDES MEET

BY

EDWARD PAYSON BERRY
AUTHOR OF "LEAH OF JERUSALEM," ETC., ETC.

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TO

MY HIGHLY ESTEEMED FRIEND

MARCUS T. BALDWIN.

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# WHERE THE TIDES MEET.

## CHAPTER

### SHADOW AND BAGS.

In these present days, which is a date exact enough not to be too vague, and sufficiently vague not to be too personal, on a blustering November night and between the hours of twelve and one, a boat impelled by oars was cautiously stealing away from New York upon the black and sullen waters of the East River. Having accurate knowledge of the appearance of this gliding craft and the character of its lading, this history ventures to draw aside the cloaking darkness and permit all who desire it a brief view of them.

The boat itself was very miserable and dirty and only less green and disreputable than the water-soaked and slippery piles along which it was proceeding, and which had divided the dark tide for so many years. The equipment of the boat consisted of one extra oar, a coil of rope, a stout boat-hook, two long augers for robbing valuably laden docks from beneath, and a rusty crow-bar. Its two rotting seats were occupied by two men. He in the stern was possessed of iron strength. His length of frame was uncommon, his back was broad, his limbs thick and brawny. The four repulsive canines of which time and debauchery and drunken brawls had not yet deprived him, by their length and ugliness suggested the fangs of some fierce wild beast. His countenance was cruel and lowering; his eyes steely and

threatening; his nose hooked like a vulture's beak; the hair which covered his low brow, sparse and bristled.

The companion of this ruffian, who sat at the oars and propelled the boat as directly and noiselessly as the rushing tide would permit, was endowed with a short, thick-set frame, which, in conjunction with a broad, flat nose, with a closely cropped bullet head, and with a wide, ugly mouth, drooping savagely at the corners, gave him the appearance of a surly bull-dog ever ready to do battle. He addressed the man at the stern as "Shadow," and himself answered to the less euphonious name of "Bags"; well-known designations among the tenement and cheap lodging-house criminals of "down-town," and bestowed by admiring associates as honorary titles, the significance of which was sufficiently patent to any unfortunate whose evil fate it was to be "shadowed" by the one or have his valuables "bagged" by the other. Frequently spoken names were they, too, among the rising generation of vagabonds, still in the swathing-bands of pickpocketthood, turned out in droves by the fetid and festering conditions of life in certain precincts well-known at headquarters.

Between these two objects of youthful emulation, on the slimy bottom of the boat and covered with a piece of sail-cloth, was a shape which might have been a shape of almost anything. It might have been a sail rolled into a bundle; it might have been a fisherman's net; it might have been even a man. Indeed, there seemed not a little likelihood that the form was that of a man. For the figure in the boat's stern would scarcely have been holding a loaded revolver hard down upon the cloth and saying in a stealthy voice: "D'yer feel that? One move and ye're a cooked 'un!" had the bundle been nothing more liable to give trouble than canvas or net.

Perhaps the strangest feature in connection with these two voyagers, as their craft crept silently along like some slow-moving monster of the night, was the fact that they were both clad in the blue garb and helmet hat of the metropolitan police. Strange fact, indeed! If they were in

very truth the guardians of the public weal, why did they steal so cautiously along as if fearful lest they should be overheard? Why that dilapidated and oddly appointed boat? Why those fierce countenances? Why that revolver pressed against the mysterious bundle? Why the following muttered conversation?

"Mind yerself, Bags," said the man in the stern. "Keep yer eye on the tide, or yer'll be smashin' one of the oars agin the pier."

"It ain't the pier as bothers me," replied Bags, in a low growl. "I kin manage the pier, and if I couldn't I'd be a blasted fool after all these years. You hain't follered the water as long as I have. What bothers me is the skittish natur' of the load. If you'd 'a took my advice we'd have croaked him before we left the hole. What's more, you would 'a done it if it hadn't been fur that old pigeon-livered lawyer. Hanged old pen-scratcher didn't have the pluck to finish the game he'd set afoot! I say we'd ought to have croaked him nigh enough to have spiled him from giving us trouble, leastwise."

"Never yer mind about that croakin'," replied Shadow in a muffled voice, developed by a habit of crime, "never yer mind about that. Don't yer know that there stuff what the old feller stuck under his nose 'll keep him hushed as good as if he war dead? No, sir; I hain't been named Shadow because I war a skeer-crow; but I tell *you*, Bags, it's better to be nabbed with a live 'un than with a dead 'un any day or night either. Stiffs is suspicious at all times, wery. Them blarmed water-cops is most uncommon eary, and the safe side is the best side every time. Still as he's fixed I ain't countin' on no great danger."

"How fur are we goin' to ride him, anyhow, pal? Reckon as there hain't much need of rowin' him much furder. He'll sound the deep of the water in a couple of shakes with that half-yard of sidewalk stickin' to him. I allow as he won't be picked up to-morrer where the tides meet. Where he's dropped there he'll lay."

"Don't yer be too easy-goin' now, Bags. The old hunter and his hounds 'll smell a stiff if it ain't nigh on a hundred fathoms deep. There's no tellin' what kin happen, and we're arter the safe side. The ropes might slip and up he'd come, and then the first thing we know'd we'd be wanted. Blast it all, a man's life ain't hardly worth the livin' these days. Times have changed, pardner, times have changed, and not fur the better. In the old days, afore we war in it, like as when the old Leather-heads war around, a man could 'a done a little job without havin' to think of it half his life afore-hand and all his life arterward. I say it's hardly worth the livin'."

"I'll be hung by the neck until I do be dead, if you hain't about got it straight," growled Bags, pulling rapidly at the oars, as if anxious to be rid of his charge. "I've been at it all my days, and times has grow'd worse and worse. And knowin' just how it is, when I call to mind that we're only gettin' five hundred a head fur this trip, I'm dead mad. I tell you it war too dangerous to be undertook fur a thousand. A first-class murder ought to come higher. It ain't fair to the profesh to do it so dog-gone cheap. And come to think of it, Shadow, why can't we make it come higher? What do you say to the old chap bein' in our hands?"

"What do I say?" repeated Shadow. "I say ye're a fool fur thinkin' it. Why, a man would say yer were a greeny at the business. Yer'd ought to know that we're in the thing as deep as the adwocate. Do yer suppose he hadn't thought all that out aforehand? Well, I reckon!"

"You reckon, do you?" muttered Bags, not relishing the reproof that his companion had let fall. "A man might think you'd been at the trade a sight longer than me to hear you shoot off your mouth. What do you know about adwocates, I'd like to know! The less you have to do with the law the better for you. All I've got to say is that them law-fellers is always gettin' ahead of some-body, and I don't like 'em."

"Don't get heaty, Bags," urged Shadow. "This hain't no time fur that. Cash is cash, and a thousand's a thousand. Besides, there's another thing as we might do well to gab about a bit. And first perhaps we're about fur enough."

"It's a wonder you think so!" grumbled Bags.

"And next," continued Shadow, "are we goin' to heave him over afore he wakes up and without takin' the stopper out?"

"Do you think as there might be money in it?" asked Bags, brightening, as he turned the boat bows-on to the tide.

"There might be and there might not," replied Shadow. "But leastwise it ain't likely to do no harm."

"He might let off a howl," suggested Bags.

"I'd fix him afore he done it twice," returned Shadow, menacingly flourishing his pistol.

"Well then it's a go, pardner. But I'm afeared it'll take half the water of the brook to git him awake. Anyhow, you take off the cover and give him a splash while I keep the boat stiddy; the swell is rollin' quite up tonight."

Shadow followed his partner's suggestion and after a liberal use of salt water, the man began slowly to regain consciousness. A rough shaking from his guardian and some fresh applications of cold water completed the operation, and the man opened his eyes in a dull and dazed manner. This manner, however, soon gave way to one of painful realization of his surroundings, and, even in the dim light of the stars, the deathly pallor of his face was visible. Shadow pressed his weapon against his victim's temple, and again demanded whether it was felt or not. Taking for granted that it was, he continued:

"Mind now, old 'un. Would yer like a word?"

The man signified that he would.

"Well, then," the ruffian went on, his finger feeling the trigger, "have an eye to yerself. If yer make a bit of a racket yer'll get a drop of cold lead in yer brain-box such

as won't make yer feel over smart. Take out the stopper, pardner."

The gag was removed and the man was free to speak.

"Now," said Shadow, "say what yer've got to say, and say it quick. And don't go to biddin' fur yer life, 'cause yer'll go over the minute yer do. Yes, that's what yer here fur, and yer knows it. Now, let it go."

"Don't be afraid of my offering you money," the man began. "I'd scorn it. Besides, don't I know that having begun you dare not stop now? All I hope and pray for is that you'll all three be caught and strung up together. Now mind. You know who I am: what I want to say is that there's something valuable between the mirror and the back-board in my bedroom. Do you hear?"

"Never mind whether I hears or not," rejoined Shadow. "Is that all yer've got to spit out?"

"No, that's not all. Mind again: There is something of great value between the mirror and the back-board in my bedroom. Now do your devilish work!"

"Not too fast, capt'n: not too rapid," put in Bags. "Pardner, what about them waluables as we twigged in the den?"

"Take them, take them!" cried the man.

"Yer hush!" said Shadow. "Yer let yer mouth off like that agin and I'll croak yer! Now, Bags, don't yer touch them waluables. Can't yer see how eager he is fur us to have 'em? He knows it would be dangerous. I'd rather give the old lawyer all his tin back agin than take them things. Do yer suppose we could keep 'em out of the scent of the hounds? No. Yer could sell 'em in San Franciscy, and they'd git a straight whiff on 'em. Don't yer touch the waluables, pardner. Yer take the man and I'll take the stone."

The bull-dog faced oarsman was reluctantly forced to admit the wisdom of his partner's words, and to forego the pleasure of becoming the possessor of the much-coveted jewels which he had observed earlier in the evening. The victim lay before him on his back, his legs securely bound

together at the knees, and his arms bound closely to his sides at the elbows. Throwing down his oars the heartless ruffian raised the helpless sacrifice in his brawny arms, while Shadow on his part laid aside his revolver and picked up the jagged piece of flagstone which was attached to the pallid sufferer to insure his "sounding the deep."

"Now, Bags," he said, "when I say three, over with him! One—two—three!"

Shadow released the stone; there was a cry from his partner of, "You devil!" and the next thing he knew Bags and his victim had gone over the side of the boat together. The circumstance was enacted in a twinkling, but Shadow had time to see, in spite of the midnight gloom (for the night was by no means impenetrable), Bags grasped in the death-grip of his prey, from which he was vainly struggling to free himself as the gloating waters closed over their heads. Shadow seized the oars and to the best of his ability prevented the disturbed boat from drifting away on the swift tide.

"It can't be but he'll come up, havin' his corks on," he muttered. "That war most almighty sudden. Blarmed good I kept all the cash. Ugh! but the runnin' of the water makes me dashed chilly arter that. He'd ought to have been roped from head to foot, tricky old forge to act so dashed cool! It can't be but old Bags'll float up."

But Shadow waited in vain. A full half-hour he maintained his watch, but no sign of his colleague appeared. Stricken in spite of his hard heart by the awful character of the scene which he had witnessed, and to which he had been a guilty party, he brought his boat's head about and rowed quickly back to the city. When he set foot on dry land, he again muttered to himself, as he was reabsorbed by the all-absorbing city:

"That war almighty sudden! A thousand don't pay fur it. I wonder if he'll come up where the tides meet. Dashed if that water don't haunt me! Somethin' rich behind the mirror, hey? Well, she'll stay there, I'm thinkin'. I hope I ain't a blasted fool!"

## CHAPTER II.

### LIGHT AND DARK.

On the same blustering night which hid within its dusky folds the tragic events which had struck a dull terror even into the depraved heart of Shadow, a close carriage, conveying two persons, drew up in front of a house of very reputable appearance situated in a very respectable portion of the city. By the two gas-lights which glowed mildly within crimson globes at the foot of the broad flight of steps leading up to the door (but whose colored rays could, by no wildest imagination, have been conjured into signals of danger), the appearance of the house was easily discernible. It was possessed of a front of brown stone, and of a door whose lower half of oak was ornamented with an ostentatious brass-handle and with elaborate carvings. Through the upper portion of the door, which was of glass, a hall decorated with paintings and statuary tempted the eye and spoke of wealth and refinement. To the right of the door was a capacious, well-lighted room where art and taste had evidently not been constrained by lack of means, and whose beauties were quite open to the admiring gaze of all passers-by who would take the pains to steal a glance through delicately-wrought curtains. This room was light, very light—almost too light. Indeed, it seemed to have absorbed nearly all the light of the dwelling; for, with the exception of the hall, the rest of the rooms were dark enough—at least, on the outside. Before this house the carriage stopped, and the occupants could be more plainly seen. They were a young man and a young woman. The coachman was smiling. The young man and girl were talking.

"Now, see, isn't this nice?" asked the youth.

"I don't know," sobbed the girl.

"There, don't cry, Rachel. I'll go in and see that everything is quite right for you. But I know you'll have all that heart could wish."

"I haven't got you, Robert."

But the young man hardly heard the plaintive words, for he had stepped out of the carriage and started towards the house. As he passed up the steps in the ruddy glow of the lights, a most casual observer must have noticed that he was in the full glory of young manhood. He was quite six feet in height and his shoulders were broad and straight. His face was smooth-shaven and finely-chiseled, and, had it not been that his manner was strangely nervous, his carriage was military. As he stood at the door waiting an answer to his summons, the girl in the carriage turned her tear-stained face towards him. It was a bewitchingly pretty face, in spite of the marks of grief which it bore; and the large dark eyes which were set in it were none the less large and dark, because they were filled with tears.

The blind maid who admitted the young man, did not usher him into the brilliantly-lighted drawing-room at the right of the door, but into a narrow apartment, entered from the left side of the hall, whose exterior appearance of darkness did not belie its actual condition. Singular though it was, it was none the less true, that this handsome and cultured youth, fitted alike by nature and training to adorn the most elegant of drawing-rooms, was conducted into the little dark room on the left. He had been but a few moments in the house which was quiet and orderly, as a dwelling of so respectable appearance should be, when a door was gently opened in the rear of the room in which he was sitting. Judging from the rustle of silk which followed, that a female had entered, he inquired:

"Is this Madame Guillion?"

A low, half-musical voice replied in the affirmative.

"I sent you an anonymous letter this morning, saying that I should bring a girl here to-night."

"I received the letter, sir, and thank you," answered the voice.

"I am sure I need have no fears as to the treatment which she will receive, Madame," continued the young man. "I wish her to have the best the house affords."

"She shall have the gentlest care and the kindest of attendants," replied the voice. "The sum which you mention will, as you know, insure her every comfort."

"Here, then, is the money," said the youth, rising and following the direction of the voice. "She is outside. I believe you will find that correct. I shall not be seen as I go out?"

"You will be observed by no one," was the decided answer of the voice. "Such is the inflexible rule of the home."

"I will bid you good-night, then."

As the young man passed out into the hall, carefully closing the door after him, and ran down the steps, his manner was visibly more assured.

"Everything is charming, Rachel," he said, when he reached the carriage. "Madame Guillion is as kind and gentle as a mother. You need have no apprehensions whatever, and soon everything will be as before."

But the poor girl only sobbed the more, and would not be comforted. Sobbing, she was handed out of the carriage, and sobbing she bade good-bye to the youth, and sobbing she was admitted to the home, and gently received by its "mother." As for the young man, finding by his watch that it was only nine o'clock, he gave the coachman a number in Madison Avenue, and sprang into the carriage.

"That's well done and over with!" he thought within himself as he was driven along. "It was a bad job—a job I don't like, and one which I never expected to be forced to perform. It's a heavy weight off my mind, and when I think how it might have turned out, I'm frightened

yet. I'm ashamed of the affair and that's a fact. Not that it is so terribly bad in itself, perhaps—all young men sow their wild oats—though I am more than sorry for poor Rachel—but I declare it is far from being just the thing when a man's engaged to be married. I'm a queer, queer fellow, anyway. I seem to possess two natures. One, the one Florence loves, is high and fond of all high and noble things ; the other, which I continually have to hold in check, is as low as the vilest. People never see that side, and it's the least side of me, but it is there, and now it has found expression. Oh, my dear girl, would I were more worthy of you ! I'd give a hand this minute to have it different."

Thinking thus, the young man was soon conveyed to another very respectable and fashionable house. This dwelling, with its front of brown stone and broad flight of steps, looked not unlike the other ; and here, as if cherishing a certain predilection for houses of such description, the youth again alighted. No nervousness now. Bidding the coachman drive home, he mounted the steps with a bound, and was soon seated beside his betrothed. Not in the dark this time. Oh, no ! Everything was as light as well could be. There was light without stint and light of various sorts. There was the mellow glow of the gas, casting a soft radiance over the objects in the room—the flowers in the thick, velvety carpet, the books on the table and the paintings on the wall. There was the redder blaze of the open fire on the hearth, as the flames rose and fell and dodged gayly about one another, as if engaged in some game known only to them and the passing winds. There was the light which beamed from the countenance of the ardent youth as he gazed enraptured upon the fair face and form of his beloved. And lastly, there was the light in the heart and on the face of the tender maiden to whom the merry chiming of wedding bells was daily growing more distinct. As her soft, speaking eyes rested lovingly, almost timidly upon the face of the man of her love, why should there not have been light in her heart, and why should not

her face have said it was so? Philip Maitland, the brother of the maiden and the life-long friend of Robert Moreland, gave up his place at his sister's side shortly after his friend entered, and wisely thought of an engagement calling him elsewhere. And so the light and the lovers were left in peaceful possession of the field.

"Oh, Robert!" said the girl, dropping in her lap the needle-work upon which she had been engaged to gaze uninterruptedly into her lover's face, "I thought you would never come. Isn't it strange! I see you every night, and we talk until one would think there was little enough left in the world to talk about, and yet when night comes again, I'm a little more anxious to see you than ever before, and have quite an unconscionable amount to say. It does seem a little strange, doesn't it?"

"Strange?" rejoined Robert. "I don't know. Anyway I have a practical explanation to offer, and that is that we spend so much of our time repeating the same things over and over."

"You mean fellow! You insinuate that we never get tired of saying we love each other, and are happy in the knowledge of our mutual love, and shall have such a happy home together. Well, I may as well confess I never do. Yes, I plead guilty; but then I declare that some things can well bear repetition."

"Oh, well," resumed Robert, "if we do repeat ourselves it's not strange, when one calls to mind that our ancestors all down the line from the very beginning have done the same thing. It's no wonder when we have all that great mass of evil heredity forcing us. It isn't recorded what Adam said to Eve when he awoke from his slumber and found her standing before him; but I venture to say that it was, '*Now* I'm in Paradise.' At all events, I'm very certain he did not say he was sorry to lose that rib."

Florence laughed. "And while we are jesting on rather a sober subject," she said, "I, too, would venture to give it as my opinion that another flaming sword would have

been necessary at the gate of the garden to keep our great father out, if he had been compelled to leave Eve behind. Seriously, Robert, what is love, anyway?"

"Well, I declare, that is a nice question to spring on a man! I suspect you want to see whether I read any poetry while I was at Princeton. What is love? Byron says it is youth's frenzy."

"Oh, I don't like Byron—he's too moody and pessimistic. Besides, he didn't love his wife, and how can he know anything true about love. No, you must try again. What is love?"

"How will Scott do?"

"Scott is better."

"Well, then, Scott says:

> "'It is the secret sympathy,
> The silver link, the silken tie,
> Which heart to heart, and mind to mind,
> In body and in soul can bind.'

Does that suit you better?"

"Yes, indeed, that is more normal—Scott was such a man in comparison with Byron. And it's my theory, you know, that a poet can't rise much above his manhood. His character refuses to be ruled by his genius. Yes, that is much better."

"Yet, rather bad for your theory, Byron could say such a sweet thing as this about our little blind god:

> "'Oh, love, young love! bound in thy rosy band,
> Let sage and cynic prattle as he will,
> These hours, and only these, redeem life's years of ill.'"

"Do you call that sweet, Robert? I don't. It's just as full of misanthropy as it can be. What kind of a wild love is that which a man seizes as he would wine to drown his sorrows. No, dear, Byron chills me. But you're improving; try again."

"You seem to forget, Florence, that there's beggary in

the love that can be reckoned. Let me close my attempts with the following :

"'Ask me not, love, what is love ?
Ask what is good of God above—
Ask of the great sun what is light—
Ask what is darkness of the night—
Ask sin of what may be forgiven—
Ask what is happiness of Heaven—
Ask what is folly of the crowd—
Ask what is fashion of the shroud—
Ask what is sweetness of thy kiss—
Ask of thyself what beauty is.'

There now, Miss Florence, I'm done ; and turn about being fair play, I call upon you to take the lexicographer's chair and give me your definition."

"Well, dear," replied Florence, suddenly growing quite sober and thoughtful, "your last quotation is good, and certainly very pretty, but it does not seem to put into words the love I feel. I have been trying all day to express myself to myself, and I think I have partially succeeded. What is love ? It is myself awake—it is my life in action."

"That has a very deep and philosophical sound, but I think I get your meaning, and it certainly is beautiful. You mean that love is self-realization."

"Yes. I had not thought of it in just that language. It is another way of expressing the same thing—perhaps a better way. Yes, love is self-realization. The deeper and holier the love, the more full and perfect the enlightenment. I sometimes wonder now how you could possibly have fallen in love with such a girl as I seem to myself to have been when you asked me to be yours. I was so weak and frivolous and vacillating. I did not know myself, and therefore, I did not know the things around me. The half of my soul being dead, what wonder is it that numberless things which needed my help came to me and touched me, and I was as irresponsive as a stone or a log ? But it is all so different now. Everything that the Creator

has put around me touches me. The clouds in heaven, the water in the river, the dead leaf in the street, and above all the slightest cry of the human, call to me and speak to me. Ah, Robert, Robert, how shall I ever thank you for all your love has done for me! And how I pity some women whose lovers and husbands are not men whom they can look up to and respect, and whose love at best must be a very poor and half-hearted affair, bringing them but the faintest notion of that rich and ennobling self-realization which has come to me. Oh, my love, what a holy thing it is to love a man whom you honor and trust to the uttermost!"

To the uttermost! What mockery! Robert Moreland could have cursed himself in the knowledge that he was unworthy of the trust reposed in him so implicitly by the noble, truth-loving heart which he had won. For the moment, the flash-light of his betrothed's pure nature was turned upon his sin, and what he had tried to excuse as a young man's indiscretion and a sowing of wild oats, gleamed forth in all its horrid reality.

"Florence, Florence!" he cried, "I am so unworthy of you. You will never know how unworthy. You say love is yourself awake. Ah, my dear, you may be awake, but you surely have your eyes closed. Your love makes light of darkness and flowers of weeds. You throw about me the cloak of your own perfect loveliness, and have eyes only for that. Or have I hidden myself from you? Have I shown you only my best side? Have I allowed you to see only the higher part of my nature?—my love for the true, the beautiful, and the good? Oh, my darling, why did you not love one more deserving of you!"

When Robert had finished, Florence turned her face full into his and, taking both his hands in hers, said slowly:

"Robert, you must never talk to me like that. And now, let us change the subject. Speaking of being awake reminds me of such a bad dream I had last night. I dreamed we had been married and were living together

just as happily as we shall live, when, as we were sitting talking one bright, sunshiny day, all at once there came a shadow big and black and thick, which hid you from my sight. Then, as I waited in fear and wonder, out of the shadow there came a voice, and gradually I saw to whom the voice belonged. It came from a dark, beautiful, but angry woman, and it said : 'I'm a Shadow of the Past : I'm a Shadow of the Past!' When this had been repeated several times, the woman drew back again into the shadow, and the shadow disappeared. After it had gone, I looked to see you, but you seemed to have gone with it. How frightened I was! I began searching all about the room, and when I could not find you, my alarm was so vivid that I awoke and found it was a dream. Will you be my Joseph and interpret to me my dream?"

It was with a supreme effort that Robert Moreland preserved his composure. It seemed to him as if some unseen hand had written in burning characters upon the wall of the room in full sight of them both, the guilty secret which he had supposed securely locked within the chambers of his own breast. He felt suddenly oppressed with the distorted fancy that some gliding spectre of the night had whispered into his love's ear the dream which she had narrated. But he succeeded in controlling himself and answered lightly :

"No, I'm no Joseph—I haven't any brothers to throw me into a pit. But I can tell you what the fabric of your dream was woven of. Of the saccharine threads of that box of chocolate caramels we devoured last night."

Here Robert diverted the conversation to another subject, and it passed from theme to theme under the sway of light and love until rather a late hour. As he rose to go, Philip Maitland, who had just returned, walked into the room.

"Oh, Robert!" exclaimed Florence, "let's give our question to Phil. Now, Phil dear, attention! One, two, three—what is love?"

"What is love?" repeated Philip, and his fine, thought-

ful face grew very sober. "What is love? Love is the fulfilling of the law."

"Phil always was such a sober-sides, dear old chap," said Robert to himself as he was walking towards home, repeating in his mind his friend's definition. "'Love is the fulfilling of the law.' I declare I don't mean to be hypocritical with Florence—I love her too much for that. I'd die for her this minute if it were necessary. By Heaven! I wish I had never seen Rachel. I never meant to be so low—never! It came so gradually, inch by inch. I never did appreciate how bad it was until to-night. My God! they'd both scorn me if they knew. I do feel like a veritable hypocrite. But Florence loves me, heart and soul, and I love her, and we'll be perfectly happy. I'm a thousand times sorry—I do repent of it. But being done it cannot be undone. 'Love is the fulfilling of the law.' Florence will find that my love will bear that definition. Dear old Phil, you were sober in college and you're soberer in seminary, but I wish I were more like you. 'Myself, awake: self-realization: the fulfilling of the law.'"

Meditating thus, Robert was not long in reaching his own home. To his surprise, his mother opened the door for him before he had time to use his key.

"Why, mother!" he exclaimed, "why not in bed? I thought that only rogues and lovers staid up so late."

But Mrs. Moreland, pale, anxious woman that she ever was, felt in no frame of mind for persiflage.

"I am much worried, son," she said, "and your jest may carry with it a very sober meaning. Your father has not yet returned. I fear something is wrong."

"There, now, mother, you mustn't let your nerves get the better of you so!" rejoined Robert, taking the troubled woman lovingly in his strong arms. "You know father is liable to take odd notions into his head, and he has probably had a fancy for making a midnight session of it somewhere. Did he say where he was going, or how late he expected to be out?"

"He intended to go to Mr. Hardangle's office. A letter summoned him to meet the lawyer after dinner."

"Of course, mother; that explains it all. You can just put your fears to rest. Don't lawyers have tongues a mile long? You know they do, even if your own father was of the same cloth. Ten to one, those two are seated smoking in Hardangle's office, and going it quite oblivious to the hour. So you just stop your worrying, my pretty mother, and congratulate me on having the sweetest and loveliest girl in the universe."

"Certainly I congratulate you, Robert," replied Mrs. Moreland. "You know very well what I think of Florence Maitland. She is delightful in herself and she comes of a very good family. I am truly happy for you both. You will get a charming wife, and Florence a good husband, loving and true—one who will never bring her a moment's trouble or shame. The thought is a great delight to me. But now I cannot help feeling very anxious about your father. Had you not better go at once to the office, dear?"

"Of course I had, mother. Anything in the world to keep you from worrying. I suppose it would be of no use to ask you to go to bed and to sleep."

"I shall await your return here. Do not be any longer than you can help, please."

With this parting request urging him on, Robert knew very little of the chill November gusts that at irregular intervals blustered against him as he hurried along. The lawyer's office was dark and deserted, but its gloom raised no suspicion of evil in his mind, for he at once concluded that his father and Mr. Hardangle had spent the evening together away from the office, or that his father had taken a more circuitous route than the one by which he himself had come—had perhaps accompanied the lawyer—and so had passed him on the way. However, he walked briskly home. His mother heard his foot on the doorstep, and threw open the door. *Her son was alone!* She gave a sudden gasp of agony as the patient does when the knife goes deep, and grasped the door for support.

"Mother, mother, what is the matter!" cried the alarmed Robert. "Has my father not yet returned?"

"No, Robert, no!" moaned the sorely distressed woman. "Oh, I knew it, I knew it! He has been robbed or murdered! Oh, Robert, Robert, Robert!"

"There, there, dear mother, don't feel so," said Robert soothingly, and as confidently as his own rising fears would permit. "Father may merely have gone home with Mr. Hardangle, and prolonged the talk at the lawyer's house. There are twenty explanations of his absence besides the terrible one you have mentioned. Now be brave, mother dear, and I will hurry round to Mr. Hardangle's and make inquiries."

Calling up one of the servants to attend his mother, Robert Moreland slipped quietly out of the house and ran rapidly to Thirty-fourth Street. Upon turning the corner, he dashed almost into the arms of the man he sought. The lawyer who had been walking slowly, absorbed in thought, startled by the young man's sudden advent, gave a frightened leap to one side.

"I trust, Mr. Hardangle," cried the hard-breathing youth apologetically, "that I have not greatly alarmed you. I must beg you to excuse me. And let my excuse be, that I am much exercised about my father."

"You have no need of excuse," replied the lawyer affably, discovering who his midnight assailant was, "no, need, Mr. Moreland, I am sure. You spoke of your father; is he taken suddenly ill?"

"No, no, sir!" cried Robert, his fears now fully aroused, "I fear it is worse than that. Was he not with you this evening?"

"What!" exclaimed the man of law. "Do you mean that your father has not yet returned home? He left me at the door of the building in which I have my office, considerably over an hour ago."

"And he then signified his intention of returning?"

"He most certainly did. He said he had not informed his wife of his evening's work lest she should worry, and

being later than he had anticipated, he must hurry. At about nine o'clock we took a cab as far as McAuley's Helping Hand, having set out to inspect the conduct of certain of your father's Water Street tenants. We came back by way of the Battery, and he left me as I have said."

"Oh, my God!"

"Why do you exclaim? You cannot suspect foul treatment? Oh, that cannot be!"

"What else can it be, sir! What else can it be!"

"Really, Mr. Moreland, I cannot say just what it may be, but I am confident that your solicitude, though quite natural, is groundless. A man of your father's characteristics might find fifty things to call him aside—he is so downright and impulsive. Why, it would not be unlike him to stop and take some drunken woman to her home."

"Not when he was hurrying because he feared my mother was anxious. No, sir; no, sir! Would I could believe it! Oh, this will kill her! Good-night, sir."

Mr. Hardangle's good-night was quite lost upon the young man, who darted away like a shot, leaving the lawyer again alone even more abruptly than he had joined him.

"You're a good runner, but you'll have to run faster than that if you overtake him to-night," muttered Lawyer Hardangle as he turned into his house. "High play: high stakes."

## CHAPTER III.

### MR. SILAS SLACK.

Mr. Silas Slack was the inmate of a tenement in "downtown." The great, dirty, square, brick enclosure in which he lived, could not justly have been numbered among the worst of its class, for there was at least one hour of the day when the sun, having climbed out of its salt bath in the eastern wave, did summon the courage to look into its dismal depths, even if, finding the attempt rather fruitless, it speedily withdrew its pale and disgusted beams.

There was a deadly fire-conducting air-shaft in it, to be sure; but then its bedrooms had been sawed out of darkness—into shade. In the rear of the house, too, was a yard of unusual size, even though, to the uninitiated, it might seem only a gap between two lofty brick walls, and even though the little patch of sky—and how far away it looked!—visible from it, did make itself seen through a perfect network of perennial clothes-lines. Moreover, there were not more than fifty squalid children in the building, and even in the pest-breeding dog-days, the water would rise as high as the second story. So numerous, in truth, were the advantages which this partitioned brick box enjoyed that Mr. Slack would never consent to its being styled a tenement at all, and always majestically rebuked such of his friends as were inclined, not unnaturally, so to denominate it, by reminding them that it was more properly called an "apartment-house."

Mr. Slack's rooms, two in all, were situated upon the water-blessed second floor. Here, with his wife and four children, he existed rather than lived—not always on the best of terms with his very near and numerous neigh-

bors, whose inquisitive and obtrusive tendencies were much to his annoyance, and upon whom he wasted no little breath and warmth in seeking to convince them that their manners were not suitable for an apartment house. But, poor, darkened beings that they were, the more Mr. Slack preached, the more they practiced the contrary doctrine, and sought, by every means in their power, to prove to him that, inasmuch as he could enjoy no family privacy, therefore the name which had been affixed to the building by common consent was rightly so affixed; and, adding insult to injury, they, one and all, because of what they chose to call his aristocratic ideas, dubbed him Apartment Slack.

Mr. Slack was an odd man. He was an odd man within, and he certainly was an odd man without. Of that which was within, he will speak for himself. As to the impression which he created within the mind of his fellows, it was that of a stunted youth of sixteen tricked out in his father's clothes. The elements which united to produce this impression were a small, boyish face, quite unencumbered by whiskers, and a short, slim frame, protected by garments which were long and—stout. Of a truth, there was sufficient material in the clothing which he habitually wore to cover two men of his size; and this spirit of excess, descending from his coat-tails, included his shoes, and, ascending from his collar, infected his hat. Add to all this the fact that when he spoke it was in the high-keyed tone of a ten-year-old boy, and the picture is complete.

This overplus of clothing gained for Mr. Slack the additional title of The Lawyer; for it was a well-known fact among his associates that his apparel came to him at second-hand, from the back of the man of law in whose office he won a livelihood for himself and his family. Mr. Slack naturally did not relish this slur, but having no choice between submitting to it and bearing the expense of clothing himself, he wisely determined to put up with it and endure it as indifferently as he could; for Mr.

Slack's earnings in the office of Jeremiah Hardangle were not of such proportions as to render him careless concerning the incurring of fresh expenses, even though they were sufficient to keep his offspring from freezing in winter and starving in summer.

Upon the same gusty evening which witnessed Shadow and Bags steering their dark craft across the dark waters and Lawyer Hardangle muttering strange things to himself on his doorstep, Mr. Slack, sitting in that one of his apartments comprising kitchen, dining-room, library and drawing-room within its four rather contracted walls, was reading his evening paper ; or, to be more precise, it was the paper which his employer had read at eight o'clock in the morning.

While the head of the family read, his eldest, Milly, was spreading the table for dinner—if the act of placing a few badly nicked and half-clean dishes upon a rickety table is justly entitled to a name so genteel—his better half was busily engaged over a rusty cooking stove, which occupied one corner of the room, frying a bit of ham and a modicum of eggs ; and his remaining three children, Mike, Mary and Jim, were kneeling on the floor, immersed in a game of marbles.

"Oh, Milly !" cried Mike to his sister, "I wish you would mind. You're always a-kicking the marvels out of the ring !"

"Drat your marvels !" rejoined Milly sharply, who had narrowly escaped being upset by them, with the teapot she was carrying. "They're always under my feet, and there hain't no room for your nonsense, anyhow !"

Mike's younger brother and sister here joining in warmly in his defense, an angry war of words ensued which gave every prospect of turning into a trial of strength, when Mr. Slack, without taking his eyes from his paper, cried out in his piping voice :

"Shut up your clack, the whole of you !"

The effect was magical. The confusion immediately ceased, and, while Milly made the tea in silence, the

younger children proceeded meekly with their game. But the family peace was destined to be once more disturbed before the dinner was safely lodged upon the table. Owing to the fact that, in size and shape, the room strongly resembled a large dry-goods box; and owing further to the table's selfishly demanding the lion's share of box-room, and crowding the stove into the corner, and little Jim's crib and four sadly bruised chairs against the wall, in an overbearing, no-thoroughfare fashion, it required rather skillful pilotage to navigate it with freedom from collision. It was therefore not an unlikely circumstance that, as Mrs. Slack was turning from the stove with the ham and eggs, she should encounter Milly returning from the table with the tea-pot to add hot water. Nor was it unnatural that this encounter should result in Mrs. Slack's being obliged deftly to save two of the eggs from contact with the floor by seizing them rather too tightly in her left hand; nor that the tea-pot should eject a few drops of boiling liquid upon the marble-players; nor that a further cry of anger should arise from the floor against the exasperated Milly. However, Mr. Slack quickly put an end to this second outbreak also, and, laying aside his paper, called the children to the table, and took his place at its head.

Now Mr. Slack's favorite meal was his evening dinner, as ham and eggs was his favorite dish; and the savory odor accompanying the smoke which filled the room almost to suffocation, warmed his heart and loosened his tongue. After he had served the ham and eggs he looked over to where his wife, a large-featured woman with a very meek and listless expression, sat pouring the tea, and said:

"Paulina, I am sure I have reason to be proud of you in every way."

"Very kind of Silas to say so," murmured Mrs. Slack.

"Very kind? Not in the least, my dear. To be sure, your face and form are not calculated to inspire statuary in the mind of the sculptor, nor madonnas in the breast of

the artist ; but, Paulina, handsome is as handsome does, and this ham and eggs is little short of perfection."

"Very grateful to Silas for speaking so," again interjected Mrs. Slack, dutifully cropping off the beginning of her remark, as if scarcely venturing to rise to the bold height of the first personal pronoun, in the presence of her mighty lord.

"Grateful? Well, if you will have it so, Paulina, so let it be, and thus let it remain," cried Mr. Slack in a vehement squeak. "Paulina," he continued, "are you proud of me?"

"Silas ought to know."

"Yes, he ought to know, and he does know. Moreover, you bring up your offspring to be proud of their father, and to do honor to the stock whence they are sprung. Children, are you proud of your pa?"

Milly, Mike, Mary, and Jim (perfect by practice) :

"Very proud, pa."

"That is right, my children—quite proper. And why are you proud of me?"

Again the chorus :

"Because you have never begged for a living, pa."

"Well said, my dears. No, I never have begged, nor will I beg. There is plenty of work to be done in this world—money-getting labor. But there are different sorts of work. Paulina, tell the children what kind of labor their father has chosen to gain for them an honorable livelihood."

"Headwork, my children," submissively breathed Mrs. Slack, without raising her vacant and lusterless eyes from her plate, "headwork."

"You hear your mother's words, children? Yes, headwork. Oh, you little guess, you, to whom food and clothing come in such ample abundance" (transferring the remainder of the ham and eggs from the dish before him, to his own plate, while Mike and Mary both drew their bare feet under them to avoid the cold draught that sucked noisily under the door), "in such abundance that they seem

to drop unasked from the skies, the hours of anxiety and study which they have cost your father. More: you do not, in the nature of the case, cannot—the evidence forbids it—imagine the toil involved in procuring this pleasant and healthful dish of ham and eggs. Mary, you seem to have more than you can dispose of, I will just relieve you of that piece of ham. I was saying, my children, that you could not, did not have the necessary papers to imagine my toil. Nor am I at all anxious that you should. I like to see my children happy, and free from care. I love to think of them as protected from all storms, and from wolves of every sort. But I do say that it will not injure you—What! Mike, have you gobbled that enormous piece of ham, and that great chunk of bread, already? You must try to eat more slowly—it will not harm you in the least, if occasionally you remember, in the midst of your plenty, and sheltered in this snug home—howbeit, surrounded a little too closely by obtrusive and unpolite neighbors——there, there's one of them at the door now! Get out of here, I say! Yes, you, you O'Brien brat, you're on the wrong floor. Get out, I say!"

"All right, Apartment!" sung out the O'Brien brat, as he slammed the door. "You'll soon be turning into a half-a-dozen hams in your little smoke-house."

"There, now," Mr. Slack began again, "there, now, Paulina, you see an instance of badly brought-up children. That brat was never taught to be proud of his pa—and it ain't remarkable, with such a pa. But where was I—what point in the case had I reached? Oh, yes. I was urging upon you as a jury, that it would not harm you, if once in a while, you turned your eyes in the direction of Broadway, and beheld your father working over involved and contradictory evidence. I said working: it was a poor word. Better, had I said drudging—slaving. I lash the flagging steeds of my mind to their duties, with terrific energy. And what, my children and Paulina, what if they should prove——Mrs. Tafferty, I wish you would do me the favor to keep out of my apartments. This is

at least twenty times you've bothered me this week, and it's only Tuesday, at that."

"Aye, indade, thin why will yez be foriver a-shpoutin?" cried Mrs. Tafferty, poking her head a little further in at the door. "A dacent person can't hear herself thinkin' fur yer iverlastin' arguifyin'. I'm slathered if I don't complain on yez!"

"There's another hideous example," Mr. Slack continued, when Mrs. Tafferty had withdrawn, "this time of a wife that gives no respect to her husband. But heed her not, my dears. I had just begun to ask—Is it possible that I can have put away three cups of tea, Paulina! Be so good as to refill—I was about to inquire what would take place if aforesaid steeds should prove unequal to the strain put upon them by said Slack. I will not answer this question. It is an irrelevant question, and not germane to the present issue. No, I will not: the prospect is too forbidding."

Mr. Slack pausing here for breath, the children looked up questioningly into their father's face to ascertain whether he had come to an end; while Mrs. Slack, throwing an unwonted emphasis into her voice, exclaimed:

"Silas, you are one of them!"

This was all the wordy lawyer needed.

"Paulina!" he cried, "do not praise me. Praise must be very slenderly dispensed to some persons: it has a tendency to volatilize the mind. Let your praise be reserved for others less sensible to your many charms. And yet, if you will praise me, Paulina, praise me for—I hesitate to say it. Give me the word, my dear."

"Your honesty, Silas."

"Ah, yes, that is it. I feared to speak it, lest I should seem already spoiled into conceit by your good opinions. That is praise which I trust is both well-merited and not calculated to injure. If I do pride myself on one thing, Paulina, and my dears, it is that I seek rather to hide than to publish my pre-eminent virtue. But do you, my children, none the less, seek to bear in mind, that honesty has

made it possible for you to have a being, and honesty has nourished you and kept you alive. Repeat it now, children. What has raised you?"

"Honesty, pa."

"Yes, my dears. And whose honesty?"

"Pa's."

"Right again. Yes, pa's honesty has done much for you—more than you can tell—by making him trusted and beloved, among his many colleagues of the law. Hence they give, bequeath, and devise to him many things—this valuable and roomy coat, and these ample pantaloons, for example. Moreover, it has kept him in the employ of one man—the highly respected Hardangle, Esq.,—well, I may say, all my days. I have been there since the time I was a mere boy in size—before my voice had changed——"

"Oh, my glorious, jumpin' jumpers!" cried a boy's voice through a hole in the wall, "and do you hear that? Before his voice changed! O my eye! It must have been the squeak of a rat, if it's changed now!"

Mr. Slack, one of whose most delicate points was his woman's voice, rose in a towering rage, and savagely threw his plate at the hole whence the voice proceeded.

"You sneaking, slandering little imp!" he cried. "You push that rag out of its hole again, and I'll do you, and have the law on you, do you hear!"

An irritating snicker from the other side of the board partition, was Mr. Slack's only reply. He hurried to replace the fallen rag, but did not stop to pick up the broken fragments of egg-stained plate which surrounded it, lest his children should take advantage of the opportunity which would be afforded to slip away from the table. He, therefore, speedily resumed his seat and his discourse.

"I was saying when I was so impudently interrupted," he began, "that my colleagues of the bar, at odd times, had bestowed upon me certain necessary outer garments. To speak more truly, it is alone from Hardangle that I

have received said garments. And yet, do I entertain feelings of gratitude and love towards the aforesaid gentleman? No, no! And why? Am I ungrateful? Again, no. But, Paulina, I leave it to you, have I not, in your estimation, by my long years of legal study, been entitled to promotion in my calling? Now, I put the question: Have I or have I not?"

"Silas certainly is right."

"Answered like the true wife you are, my dear. Yes, I have merited it. But I have not received it. With the exception of a slight raise in my salary, I am no higher in my calling and vocation to-day than when I first began. And is it reasonable that the small item of a few clothes for the body, should outweigh this outrage? Is it reasonable or is it not?"

"Silas is surely in the right."

"Of course I am. It is very unreasonable—and it is not a fact! Ah, Paulina, wealth makes men's hearts cold as a stone and twice as hard. I hate them, my dear, one and all. I tell you they are grinders. They get their heels upon poverty and trample it into the dust. I hate them and despise them; though not without reason—I could produce the evidence. And hating them as I do, Paulina, I am ever watchful for an opportunity to get even with them, to raise their feet from my neck, and that so suddenly and so high, that I shall spill them —spill them completely over!"

"Go it, old Fourth of July!" cried a lad's voice at the key-hole. "Give 'em the deuce with pepper on it! Squeak away till the cat catches you!"

Mr. Slack, who had worked himself into quite a heat with his own words, was in no mood for this exasperating interruption. He ran to the stove, seized the poker, and darted vengefully toward the door. But the little miscreant was safely out of harm's way. There was a patter of feet in the darkness below, and then a derisive laugh sounded up the winding stairs, followed by the words:

"Keep your eye out for old Tabby, mousey, or she *will* nab you."

The street-door slammed triumphantly as the young urchin left the building, and his victim had nothing to do but slam his own door in return, put the blood-thirsty poker back in its place, and render the little room lurid with curses on his insolent neighbors. The youngest three members of his audience having now cleverly betaken themselves to their marbles, and his wife and eldest daughter being engaged in clearing the table, Mr. Slack, as soon as his passion had time to cool itself, put on his coat and hat, and signified his intention of going out.

"Do I make a secret of my evening resort, Paulina?" he asked.

"Silas does not."

"No, Paulina, I do not. I am going to my old Side Pocket. Not to Hell's Dairy, nor to the Poor Man's Rest —though there is good three-cent whisky to be had there —nor yet to the Heavenly Home, nor to the Rock of Salvation. To none of these do I go: but to my old Side Pocket, conducted and managed by one Paddy McCarthy. When I return from said Pocket, in what state shall I be, Paulina?"

"In an exhilarated state, Silas."

"Yes, in that, and in no other. Have you ever known me to go beyond and transcend the bounds of decency and propriety, Paulina, and reach an intoxicated state, a maudlin state?"

"Paulina never has."

"And never will! Now, good-night, my dears. While I am gone, you shall be not a moment out of my mind. The family-tie is very strong in me, Paulina, very—the knot was well made. Good-night."

And Mr. Slack, virtuously refusing the many saloons which he passed on his way, saloons on every street-corner, saloons in the middle of every block, saloons next to tenements, saloons under tenements, saloons next

to shoe-stores, saloons next to butchers' stalls, saloons next to grocery stores, and saloons next to each other—Mr. Slack scrupulously avoiding all these, did not once pause in his walk until the wire-protected and blind-screened Side Pocket received him into its ever-extended arms.

## CHAPTER IV.

### MR. SLACK IS STRICTLY HONEST.

THE next morning could by no possibility have dawned in any other month than November. The air was raw as a Newfoundland fog flavored with icebergs, and seemed to drop upon the earth almost with an audible shock from the leaden mass of cloud which hid the sky. The water of the harbor and rivers was so cold and sullen, as apparently to begrudge the gulls the breakfast they were fishing out of it. A bleak wind was claiming sole possession of the streets as first-comer, and the dust was asserting a good second claim.

In spite of all these disagreeable conditions, the rising day beheld Mr. Slack punctually repairing to Lawyer Hardangle's office, and in due time he arrived at the huge stone edifice which was the scene of his daily occupation. He had no need to pause at the foot of the stairs to consult the directory whose gilt letters glowed at him from a black tablet on his left, to learn that the office he sought was upon the second floor. Long experience had done away with any such necessity. Mounting the stairs, therefore, without delay, he directed his steps towards the door upon whose upper half of obscure glass, was inscribed in black lettering :

JEREMIAH HARDANGLE
Attorney at Law Master in Chancery
Notary Public.

Before this door Mr. Slack halted his steps, and, scowling at it as if it had been some living individual who had mortally offended him, he muttered :

"Hardangle Esquire, ladies and gentlemen. Highly respected by those that don't know him. A Turner at Law. Master in Chance, sir. Notorious Boot-lick."

Having rendered this very free translation of the hieroglyphics before him, Mr. Slack proceeded to unlock the personified portal, to enter the waiting-room which led into the main office, and to dispose his hat and coat upon their accustomed pegs. After these preliminaries, he shuffled over to the little closet which snuggled tightly against the wall beside the hall-door, and giving the innocent brass knob a savage jerk, as if it, too, in some mysterious way or other, were implicated in the nefarious scheme of "grinding him to powder," he brought to light a broom, a dust-pan and a feather-duster. Armed with these implements of cleanliness, he entered the main office and began a fierce onslaught on yesterday's dust.

His work was almost finished, when it chanced to occur to him that Wednesday was his usual day for sweeping under the lawyer's desk. He, therefore, ill-humoredly betook himself to his knees and began to work his broom furiously back and forth under the desk, whose drawers on either side reached almost to the floor. He had nearly completed this unpleasant task, and was grumbling something about its menial character for one so long in the profession as himself, when the broom in its dusty travels caught hold of some small, hard object, and snapped it against the base-board. To the base-board immediately followed Mr. Slack. For, as the object lay at rest on the floor, it had very much the appearance of gold. And gold it proved to be! As Mr. Slack examined it with widening eyes, he found it to be a sleeve-button upon which a tiny, jeweled serpent with ruby eyes, coiled itself into the form of the letter W. Looking quickly up to make sure that no one was observing him, Mr. Slack's first impulse was to conceal the new-found treasure in his pantaloons pocket. But afterwards, affecting to despise himself because so base a thought had for a moment found lodging-place in his honest mind, he placed the button on the win-

dow-sill, and finished his work. Then he returned to the window, and seating himself in it, sought by a closer examination to learn the value of what he had found.

"Here," he said to himself, waxing grandiloquent as his scrutiny revealed the undoubted worth of the jeweled button, "has Fortune, in the form and under the guise of a well-worn office-broom, thrown into my way one of those favors which she bestows only upon the brave. And what shall I say? That I am brave. I did not shrink from performing a most disagreeable and obnoxious duty. And what shall I say next? That I am tender. The bravest being the tenderest, as Hardangle—Mister Hardangle, ladies and gentlemen—said in court last week in the case of Evans vs. Smyth, it follows necessarily that the brave are the tender. Therefore, being tender, I am possessed of feelings, emotions. And if I am possessed of a heart, I would not willfully rob a man of that which is no doubt dear to him. To sum up: I am proven brave, tender and honest; and, being all these—and especially the last—the desire which rises large within me, to retain as personal property this trinket, cannot spring from dishonest motives. Hence, gentlemen of the jury, I do honestly desire to retain it. And, furthermore, I may add that my desire is naturally an honest one because, first, I came by the button so honestly; because, secondly, I am a poor man, and Hardangle grinds me; because, thirdly, the rewards of uprightness often come in unlooked-for ways; and because, fourthly, the case is proved, and I hear Hardangle coming up the stairs. Good-morning, Mr. Hardangle."

"Good-morning, Silas," replied the man of law, without once looking at Mr. Slack, and seeming, as was his wont, completely absorbed by his own thoughts and quite careless of those of any one else. Indeed, his dark face with its grizzled, close-cropped mustache and self-contained, far-away eyes, would have revealed quite as much of the thoughts and feelings of its possessor, had it been encased in the visor of some mediæval knight. "I am rather later than usual," he continued. "Any one called?"

"No one has called, sir," deferentially replied Mr. Slack. "Let me take your coat and hat, sir."

"And here, Silas," said the lawyer, "take this card, and as soon as you can, go and inquire at the address after the health of the man whose name is upon it—Mr. Moreland."

Mr. Slack received the card with a bow, and the man of law without more words betook himself into his office. He had barely closed the door and sat down at his desk, when Mr. Slack knocked and announced:

"Mr. Sargeant, please."

Mr. Sargeant, being bidden enter, did so, and in a manner which caused Mr. Slack to mutter to himself, after the door was again closed:

"Fox! Cat! Reminds me of that little snake. Glides instead of walks. Thief! Detective!"

The object of these muttered ejaculations having seated himself at Mr. Hardangle's request, announced his business in words which were perfectly audible, though they seemed to be whispered rather than uttered aloud. While he spoke he kept his eyes searching restlessly about the room, until he appeared to have given his particular attention to every tack in the floor, and every straying thread of cobweb upon the ceiling; and until Mr. Slack who was uprightly watching at the key-hole, involuntarily thrust his hand into his pocket to make sure that he was still in safe possession of his "bawble," and hastily congratulated himself upon his honesty.

"This is Mr. Hardangle, I believe," said the stranger. "My name is Sargeant. In answer to a telegram from his son received last night at police headquarters, I am looking into the disappearance of one Reginald Moreland. I called to see his wife and son this morning, and was informed that his father was a client of yours."

"What!" exclaimed the lawyer in an unbelieving voice. "He did not return?"

"He did not," replied the detective.

"Can it be possible!" cried the man of law. "His

son, as you of course know, last night informed me of his father's strange delay in reaching home, but I surely thought that the young man's fears were ungrounded. Excuse me one moment. Being unable through press of work to call at the house this morning, I was just sending my man to make inquiries."

Mr. Slack had only time to move noiselessly from his stand at the key-hole and begin ostentatiously putting on his coat and hat, when his employer entered the waiting-room.

"Make haste, Silas," he said. "But instead of inquiring after the gentleman's health, bear my sympathy to the son and tell him that nothing but professional duty should hinder me from seeing him myself."

Mr. Slack had overheard more than enough to render him very unwilling to depart, yet, with the lawyer's eye upon him, he had no choice, and so set out.

"Why, this is terrible!" continued the lawyer, resuming his seat at the desk. "Yes, he was both a client and friend of mine. A peculiar man in many ways—a fact which offered to me an explanation of his delay last night—but at bottom sound and honest-hearted. Have you no theory as to his disappearance?"

"You will excuse my answering that question, sir. We detectives, you know, are much better at asking questions than at answering them. Your client was, I believe, last seen in your company."

"Yes. As his son may have told you, we went last night to watch the behavior of certain tenants of his on Water Street, of whose conduct he had heard complaints."

Now, though Mr. Sargeant did not in the least doubt the word of a lawyer so widely known as Mr. Hardangle, through force of habit he could not avoid laying pitfalls for him. And so, having been informed by Mr. Moreland's son, half an hour before, that the lawyer had given nine o'clock as the hour of the setting out of himself and client, he smoothly made mention of the hour of ten. Being corrected in this, he merely remarked:

"Oh, yes: I believe it was nine. My memory sometimes fails me." Then he added with great truth: "But not often."

The hour being thus firmly settled, Mr. Sargeant, knowing full well that the two men had been driven to their destination, proceeded, with acute forgetfulness, to suggest that the walk to Water Street must have been rather a breezy one. Set straight a second time, he quietly observed:

"You may judge from my remark that young Mr. Moreland is too much overwrought to give very correct information; and as for his mother, I was forced to see her in bed. I should have saved myself trouble by coming to you at first. You were, I believe, engaged in your observations until about midnight, when the cab called for you by agreement at Jerry's little Bible-house."

"All wrong, all wrong," replied the man of law. "We dismissed the cab at McAuley's, and walked back, returning at about eleven o'clock."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mr. Sargeant with great seeming vexation. "It is a provoking thing to be misinformed. You doubtless had the company of an officer. Water Street after dark is not the quietest spot in the world."

"No, we were quite alone. Both being large, powerful men, we felt no fear."

"A little dangerous. The street is much improved, but man-traps as silent as the grave and as hopeless, still flourish thereabouts. The street was well-named. The crop of criminals find plenty of moisture. But after leaving Water Street what took place?"

"From there we returned by way of the Battery—he leaving me at the foot of the stairs, and I resuming my seat at my desk to put an hour on a case which comes on before Winslow this morning."

"You saw nothing unusual in Mr. Moreland's actions?"

"Nothing whatever. He was, as I have said, an odd man, but I noticed nothing which indicated that he was not altogether himself."

"Upon leaving you he started to walk up-town?"

"He did; and I then had no further thought of him until, as I was nearing home, his son dashed suddenly upon me with the strange news. I wish now that I had followed my first inclination and gone to his house to offer my assistance to his son. But I cannot believe that my client will not put in an appearance to-day. If I could, I fear my case would fare badly enough at court this morning."

"I am sorry under the circumstances to take more of your time, sir, but I shall be forced to ask you to describe the man who drove you, and tell me where you hired him."

"You fellows suspect everybody!" exclaimed the man of law with a slight smile, which, however, did not affect the one self-contained expression of his face. "I saw the man crossing Broadway at the Post-office yesterday noon. I did not notice him particularly, but I think he was a man of medium height, rather fleshy, and dressed in a long, well-worn, rusty-brown overcoat. He had, as I remember, a smooth, round, jolly, red face—not at all a countenance for dark deeds."

"No," said Mr. Sargeant absently. "You know nothing more definite about him?—his number, the color of his horse?"

"I really do not."

"Then I need trouble you no longer, sir. I bid you good-morning."

"Good-morning, Mr. Sargeant. I hope and pray that, if the worst prove true, your search may be successful. Good-morning."

The detective started up-town on leaving the lawyer's office, and was soon lost amid the hurrying throngs that filled the streets. In the course of the morning he reappeared near the foot of East Twenty-sixth Street, and wended his way toward the building in which lay the city's unknown dead. He nodded knowingly to the man at the desk, and passed in to examine all that was left of the

poor unfortunates whose miserable span of life was thus rounded by a miserable sleep. Ah, dead-house, what pitiful ways converge at thy doors! Some sweet and green with breath of summer at the start; some dank and dismal all the sad, sad way. The disappointments of life's dream—disappointments too hard for the frail frames on which they fell—have brought thee many a sightless guest. Hearts born in a dark realm of despair have run their brief despairing course straight to the dark, cold river-waters and to thee. Souls sent into this world to test our love, have sought it in vain—but not thee. Thou art Crime's back-door, through which she rudely hustles her heart-weary, soul-devastated victims into night, with few to pity or seek to save. Mute witness art thou of our unconcerned ease and matchless hard-heartedness.

"A tough bird brought to book at last," remarked the detective, reappearing after his inspection. "I didn't suppose water would drown him."

"Oh, Bags?" replied the keeper. "Followed the water one night too long. Picked up by tug Ben Wilson, this morning in the East, a few hundred feet off the battery. Dressed for some deep game. Anything up?"

"There may be," was Mr. Sargeant's safe reply, as he walked away with a clew twinkling knowingly in his eyes.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE SIDE POCKET.

When Silas Slack returned from his errand he found the office locked and deserted. Here he spent the remainder of the day, his sole labor being profuse explanations of the lawyer's absence, and as it grew dark, having completed to his own satisfaction another honest day's work, started for home. Contrary to his usual practice, he did not take with him his employer's *Tribune*, but on the way purchased an evening paper. So unwonted an occurrence, together with the rapid gait at which he walked when once he had the publication safely tucked under his arm, afforded undoubted evidence that no ordinary topic was occupying his mind; as did also the avidity with which he devoured that portion of the news which related to the disappearance of his employer's late client, Reginald Moreland. He had just completed his reading, when his wife announced dinner; whereupon Mr. Slack placed his chair at the head of the table and gathered his family about him. The one theme of his loquacity this evening was honesty, and the first, middle, and last points of it were his own honesty. Mrs. Slack, however, who was not a stranger to her husband's ways, immediately formed the uncharitable judgment that he had been guilty of sharp practice of some sort, though she prudently kept her opinion to herself.

"And why," said Mr. Slack, as he shoved back his plate after supper, "why do I so mortally despise dishonesty? Why, Paulina, and my dears, if not because it is despicable? The honest man who works all day for his living and gains his bread by the sweat of his brow, how can he help despising the rogue who, too lazy to work, fraud-

ulently wins for himself needed food and raiment. And why," he continued, rising from the table and preparing to go out, "are honesty's mandates the guide and chart by which I steer my vessel along life's rugged pathway? Because she smiles upon her worshipers, and exalts them by unexpected blessings. This very day, Paulina, Fortune threw in my way a rare favor. I feared at first to seize it; but at the last I saw my way clear to stretch forth my hand and clutch it. And what cleared my way? Honesty. And now, Paulina, before I go, I must say one thing more. The tables are turning—the spills are beginning. The poor and down-trodden will ere long receive their full revenge. A noted money-bag, a veritable gold-bug has been ignominiously spilled! Good-bye, my dears."

A five-minutes' walk brought Mr. Slack within the congenial doors of the Side Pocket—not congenial to you or me, reader, but to Silas Slack and the motley crowd that had gathered within it, as a safe shelter from the driving rain which was amply fulfilling the bleak prophecy of the morning. The inmates of the place were seated in a circle around the cheering warmth of a stove that occupied a sand-box in the centre of the saloon. The stove had once been painted white, but owing to the quantities of tobacco chewed by the frequenters of the Pocket, it had at this time a very uncleanly and streaked appearance. In shape it gave the impression of two large bells standing one upon the other, rim to rim. Not cathedral bells, surely, to call all weary mortals to rest and worship; not Christmas bells to ring out to the sky tidings of peace and good-will; not the bells in the steeples to toll off the flying hours of the night. No, these bells if they ever had been put to the use which their form suggested, must have had a very distinctive function. Perhaps in slow and funereal beats they rang the knell of the Pocket's victims—broken hearts, ruined homes, passing souls: souls passing out of darkness into night; homes devastated, the abiding places of pale, sad-eyed women, and wan, starving children; hearts of men, women, and children, broken, broken, broken!

Whether this were true or not, evidently made no manner of difference to the circle that were basking in the warmth of the fire, for they hugged the stove in a very friendly manner that they might dry their garments wet with the chill November rain. In consequence, the air was heavily charged with a sad mixture of steamy odors arising from coats and vests old and filthy and torn ; from pantaloons bedraggled and frayed into rotting strings at the bottom ; and, worse than all, odors from the wearers of these garments, by whom water either for drinking or cleansing, was esteemed a natural enemy sedulously to be avoided. How it came to pass that a man of Mr. Slack's virtue found fellowship with this low-browed crew in which every countenance was marred by vice and crime, is a problem that must be left to the psychologists ; but sure it is that, having taken a small drink at the bar as a sort of initiation fee, the man of strict integrity drew a stool into the favored circle with a very much acquainted air.

"Woll, Honisty," grunted Mike the Kid, thrusting his great quid close into one cheek, to allow his tongue the freedom of his mouth, "yer coat-tails doan't often miss thur way, hey? Wan moight allow as the leetle burdie in the hoam-nest warn't so chipper a warbler as she moight be, from the way ye manage to lave her sasiety ivery night for that of the Pawket—long may she wave ! It's a bit of a nawsty noight out."

"Right bad and nasty, right bad and nasty," repeated Mr. Slack, spreading his hands to the genial warmth. "Still, the more stormy the wave, the more pleasing and snug the harbor. Where's Jakey ?"

"Hain't you heerd that?" cried Billy the Tough, expectorating a disgusting quantity of tobacco-juice into the sand-box in which the stove stood, and drawing the back of his hand with a juicy inhalation slowly across his mouth. "Jakey won't show up here for many a long night, I'm thinkin'. He got into a muss with his old woman last night, and bein' a good deal in, he drew his gun from his pocket and tried to fill her with lead. I dunno

whether he done her or not, but leastways the cops turned the cuff on him."

"Too bad for Jakey, too bad!" responded Mr. Slack in a feeling pipe. "Honesty is the best policy."

"Now don't you begin that chaff again, Lawyer," muttered "Horrible" Joe. "I'm sick of it, and I reckon as there's others besides Jakey as would be behind the bars if they had their dues. I ain't forgot about that time I ketched you by the river with that kid, you want to recollect!"

"Oh, well, well," replied Mr. Slack, evidently not wanting to recollect, and not relishing his companion's dark hint, "don't let's get mad, Joe."

"No, we'd better not," rejoined Joe. "You wouldn't be no more to lick than a hen-sparrer. Your muscle all goes out in wind."

"I say, Lawyer," interrupted Mike, "I 'low as ye heve heerd the oother nooze what some of our boys heve been up to?"

"Him!" broke in Molly the Crook. "Dashed if he has: Lawyers never hears nothin'. Takes them all the time to talk."

Mr. Slack inquired whether the news was anything unusual.

"Summat so, Lawyer," replied Mike. "But I allowed as bein' he war in your office at last accounts, you must heve heerd more about it than Dan theer"—pointing to the bar-tender—"could foind in the papers. It's down theer how as a rich wan from the Av'nue war in your office last noight, and how he war nabbed on the way hoam and more nor likely had his neck slit or war set afloat for a midnoight sail down the river. So ye hadn't heerd it?"

"Well," replied Mr. Slack, "I can't say that I heard it, but I did read something of it in the paper to-night. And I declare that we poor ones will get our day some time, and I wish in my heart that all the grinders were as well out of the way as Reginald Moreland."

"Who's clackin' about Reginald Moreland, now?"

growled a tall, raw-boned late-comer, making his way to the bar and laying down three cents for whiskey. "Who is, I say?"

"Holloa!" cried the Kid. "Durned if you hain't able to crawl about yit, Shadder. And up to the toimes in all useful knawledge too. Who's a-talkin'? Why, who but the Lawyer of coorse."

"Now, see here, Apartment," said the new-comer, seating himself by the fire and fixing an ominous eye upon Mr. Slack, "Shadder and you have always been friends, hain't yer?"

"I trust we have, Shadow," squeaked the little man meekly.

"Yes. And that notwithstandin' the fact that, at times, yer do git a little uppish. But I am jest a-tellin' you, that if we're goin' to be friends much longer, yer want to shet right up about old Moreland. D'yer hear?"

A look of sudden attention spread over the circle of faces about the stove, as these words fell from the lips of one whom they all acknowledged their easy superior in matters of crime, and for whom they entertained a feeling which might be styled "down-town veneration." Mr. Slack wisely venturing no further reply to the ruffian's words than a mumbled wish that they might always be on good terms at any cost, Shadow repeated his last injunction.

"Yes," he said, "yer want to keep yer head tight shet about him. And this," he continued, "is my terms to the hull of you. Cause why? First: I say so. And second: You see as Bags hain't with me to-night?"

They all had noticed it.

"Well, he hain't goin' to be with me no more. He hain't goin' to have no more swipes with us nor nobody. Where is he? Lyin' with his toes turned up on the marbles at the foot of Twenty-sixth. Yes, that's where he is. The old boy has fetched up stiff at last. Bags is done, and afore we leave we'll drink to him. I hain't been his pardner long—the cops hain't ever caught us together yet—but I have know'd him long enough as a friend, to know

that he war an ornyment to the perfesh. But now you're a-askin' yerselves what all this means, and why I'm so tender about old Moreland's bein' spouted about. Well, that's jest what I'm a-comin' to. It war this way : I war a-askin' Bags if it war river fur last night. He said, no, he had other game afoot. I wanted to know war I in it. He said we war pardners on the water but not on the land. Well, war he a-goin' to tell me the job? He hadn't no objections to do that. He war in fur somethin' spick-and-span new. If it worked we could both have a hitch at it. He war goin' to tog up fur a blue-coat, and go round to the saloons like a new cop and git a cart-wheel or two and plenty of free drinks for pledging himself to keep mum in his new appintment. Well, I follered the water all fur nothin', and along about midnight when I had got back and war walkin' down South Street, I seed what I took to be a cop and a gold-bug comin' towards me ; but when we got nigher, dashed if it warn't Bags in his new togs ! Of course I warn't goin' to spile no fees, so I walked on by and made not to see 'em. This mornin', Bags not turnin' up I began to have my suspects that he had been nabbed at his tricks, and about noon I called round to a station or two, but they hadn't heered about him or his togs. Well, things didn't look jest right, and when this evenin' the boys came a-blowin' up their papers with the disappearance of one Moreland, I let on to myself that that war Bags's man. So I skeered a paper off of one of the little devils, and afore I war done with it I found I war right. And what did I see right below the other business, but that a man who the police had said war Bags alias Soper, war picked up by a tug this mornin' all dressed up in his blues, and brought to Twenty-sixth ! By dash ! but it did make me feel queer to think of him lyin' there all washed and stiff. How he come to his shrouds lays over me ; but there he is and I allow as it war through that old Moreland fool somehow. So that's the reason of my not wantin' him to be clacked about ; and I say, Lawyer, if yer make the thing the staple of yer gab, I'll——"

But Shadow did not finish his threat. A tap on his shoulder of a certain well-known type, turned him around with a start; and at the same instant the whole company became aware that a man of a keen, you-can't-fool-me aspect, had, they knew not when, entered the Pocket as a listener to Shadow's recital. Mr. Slack recognizing the apparition muttered: "Cat, fox, flatty!" Billy and Mike recognized it, too, as also did Shadow.

"I know you, don't I?" said the man, looking hard and meaningly into Shadow's eyes.

"What if yer do!" growled Shadow, trying to evade the gaze.

"And you know me, don't you?" the man continued, not once removing his penetrating eye from Shadow's face.

"Don't care if yer do," muttered the outlaw.

"Don't, hey? Well, why should you? But perhaps you do respect me enough to let me tell you what a precious rascal you are. What a tall yarn you've been reeling off, haven't you, now? I'm really quite obliged to you for letting me know that you have taken to the water—it may be useful. What good luck I had to strike this saloon first! You're quite a literary man, ain't you, with your yarns and your newspaper reading. I declare, I'd just like nothing better than to hear you read a little. Why, here's a paper in my pocket. Will you be so obliging as to give us a little snatch? Halloa! there's the little lawyer. I saw you this morning, didn't I? You didn't know I expected rather to see you to-night, did you? Shadow has spoken pretty sharply to you. Wouldn't you like to hear him read? he can do it so well, you know."

Mr. Slack found honesty compelling him to affirm that it was quite immaterial to him whether Shadow read or was silent. However, this did not seem in the least to chill the ardor of detective Sargeant, and he handed Shadow the paper and pressed him to read. If he was surprised when that malefactor grumblingly proceeded to do so, he evinced no marks of surprise; but he was very

easily satiated for a man who had professed such eagerness to sit as a listener at the reader's feet.

"There," he said, when Shadow had finished a line or two, "I'm sure we're all obliged to you for your accommodation : you do it even better than I had supposed. Yes, you are literary. And literary people have such power of invention that it's always interesting to hear them talk, you know. Now, let me ask you, how it is that I saw you and Bags together last night, both dressed in officers' blues? You've got such ability at inventing, perhaps you can make that fact hitch with the nice little story you've been telling us all here to-night. For we were all here, you know."

It was quite in vain that the keen-eyed officer scanned the desperate features before him : to discover evidence of wincing under this insinuation : not a single flash of fear or astonishment varied their sullen, dogged cast. Shadow was not unacquainted with the " tricks of the trade," and was too old a bird to be so easily taken with chaff.

"There hain't no use of yer playin' bluff!" he growled. "If we warn't together, we warn't—and that's the hull of it."

"You're logical, too, ain't you?" blandly continued the representative of justice. "Two and two make four couldn't be more so. I admire logic. Indeed, I think so well of it, that I have a good mind to show all these good-looking fellows here to what an extent it can be used. Now, if you didn't get any spoils last night along with Bags, you naturally and logically can't have any about you now. Perhaps you wouldn't object—being so logical—to just letting me go through your pockets, for the sake of logic, you know."

"Perhaps I would though!" snarled Shadow.

"But then, inasmuch as I know you so well, I suppose you will let me," winningly remarked Mr. Sargeant. "Just as a friend of long acquaintance, and in the interests of logic, you know."

And without more ceremony, the detective ran through Shadow's rags, in a familiar if not exceedingly friendly manner, and with a deftness which thoroughly convinced Mr. Slack that the little jeweled serpent in his own pocket, had come to life and begun to sting.

When detective Sargeant left the saloon after a fruitless quest, Shadow was the recipient of many cordial congratulations for the eminently fitting manner in which he had conducted himself through his ordeal, while Billy the Tough vouchsafed to consider him a proper companion for the crookedest cracksman that ever handled a jimmy. It still rained outside and it was still very warm and comfortable inside. As was natural, therefore, the evening in the Pocket was rather protracted. After the detective's departure, Shadow, as he had promised, stood treat to Bags's memory and it was not long before each article in the pocket was drinking to its own private satisfaction. About midnight, Shadow signifying his intention to depart, the Kid vehemently proposed: "Bags, and a plisant noight's slape to him on his new bed"—a toast which, from the hilarious manner of its reception, was considered the best hit of the evening. After it Shadow departed, making his way in a very zigzag manner to his lodgings. As he entered them, a stealthy individual who had very much the appearance of detective Sargeant turned away from the door, muttering:

"I rather think that you do tell the truth, but it can do no harm to just keep an eye to your studies."

In the mean time, the pocketed were making ready to take their departure with a fitting finale. Mike had lifted Mr. Slack into a chair, as if he had been no heavier than a good-sized chip, and amid the clapping of hands and the ringing of glasses was demanding from him an oration in honor of their deceased associate. Mr. Slack, who always prided himself on the exuberance of his own verbiage, was quite willing to comply; and, having reached that "exhilarated state" beyond which it was his boast never to transgress, squeaked quite wildly away for about five

minutes. At the expiration of that time, finding it utterly impossible to refrain longer from his favorite theme, he began to extol in grandiloquent language, the matchless character and superior benefits of perfect integrity. As a proof of its transcendent value, he drew his bauble from its hiding-place in his pocket, and displayed it to the stupid, maudlin gaze of his friends.

"See!" he shrilled, "this is what my superb uprightness brought and presented me. See it sparkle! Oh, honesty, honesty, what crimes are committed in thy——"

But the intoxicated little orator, having hit upon a subject not remarkably adapted to his hearers, was roughly pulled down from the contracted platform upon which he was tottering, and, as it was now high time for all honest people to be in bed, with a parting drink to the long life of the unparalleled Pocket, the party broke up.

In due time Mr. Slack reached his home. He fell down twice in ascending the dark, winding stairs of the tenement, and, stumbling over a chair when he entered his narrow apartment, tumbled sprawling into the crib where his youngest child lay sleeping, inhaling filth with every breath. Little Jim, thus rudely disturbed, awoke with a howl, and continued howling, much to his fuddled father's discomfort, until Mrs. Slack was forced to crawl, half asleep, from her bed. In steering her way where passage was difficult in the light of day and with eyes wide open, the poor woman not unnaturally trod upon the recumbent form of her son Mike, who was sleeping comfortably upon the floor, directly in her course. His angry protest against such treatment, conjoined with the howling of his small brother and the helpless, tipsy attempts at soothing in which his father was engaged, soon aroused the remaining members of the family, and a general hubbub ensued in the darkness. However, after a long search for a match, light was thrown upon the animated scene, and Mrs. Slack had again lulled her youngest to sleep and pacified the irate Mike, when, at the very moment peace was returning to resume her gentle reign, Mr. Slack, wishing to assure

himself that he was still possessed of his much-loved treasure, thrust his hand into his pocket. The button was gone! In vain did the distressed man, bitterly calling to mind the acute apprehensions of which his brief ownership of the little trinket had been the cause, fumble through all his pockets again and again. In vain did he look carefully up and down the dingy stairs. In vain did he again arouse little Jim from his new-found rest, in ascertaining that the button had not fallen into the crib. And quite in vain would be the attempt to describe the scene of utter disorder and discomfort which followed. Suffice it to say, that some time before the lagging sun could muster sufficient courage to forsake its luxurious couch in eastern lands, the family of honest Mr. Silas Slack had fallen into repose.

## CHAPTER VI.

### BELOW STAIRS.

It was to no purpose that detective Sargeant kept an almost continuous eye upon Shadow : he could not connect him with the crime. He therefore reported at headquarters that Reginald Moreland had come to his end at the hands of one "Bags," alias Soper, and added to the story which he had obtained from Shadow at the Side Pocket, the conjecture that in an attempted robbery along the water-front, both men had fallen into the river and been drowned, the assailant's body alone floating because of the small life-preserver which he wore and probably made a habit of wearing.

This theory was well received at headquarters, but did little to assist the bereaved wife to recover from the appalling shock which her delicate nature had received. It seemed to have smothered completely the small spark of life which for long had been struggling for existence. She never rose from the bed on which she had been prostrated, and one day when the nurse whispered to the despairing son that the end was near he could not be surprised. Thus, almost without warning, Robert Moreland was robbed of father and mother and left desolate. But even such grief as his added no more hours to the passing days than their accustomed twenty-four, and days passed into weeks, and weeks into months. Winter surrendered the throne of the world to its gentle queen, and finally June burst forth in all its fullness of summer glory. There were not wanting those who found fault, but the most, realizing Robert's lonely position, felt it to be quite justifiable, when, on the rarest day in the month, Philip Maitland officiated at a very quiet wedding in his mother's

home, and there started on their life-journey a very happy, devoted pair.

Upon a certain evening not long after Robert Moreland and his young wife had returned from their wedding journey, and taken up their abode in the old Moreland home, Jeremiah Hardangle was seated at his dinner in his capacious dining-room. Mr. Hardangle was a bachelor and he was eating alone. What a face he had! Look at it once, you must look again and find your eyes irresistibly riveted there. There was such power in it—such a masterful expression of mental grasp and energy. How cool his ridged brow looked! How firmly his lips closed! What a piercing glance lighted his calculating gray eye! The breath of June was softly stealing in at the casement, but, as long as the lawyer sat there, the room seemed chill. There was no heart in his keen countenance. Not a single warm emotion had made a line on his face. Where Lawyer Hardangle came, there also a withering frost blew its icy breath. Even the inanimate objects with which he had surrounded himself in his own home, appeared to have fallen a prey to his emotionless, constraining spirit, and were stiff and cheerless.

Mrs. Molly Humstone was the lawyer's housekeeper. She was one of the few beings who escaped in a measure his congealing influence, and who refused to accept a body of ice in lieu of the warm flesh and blood to which she naturally had grown attached in a life of forty-five years. She was blunt and honest, and had a decided tendency to stoutness. For the most part her characteristics hit the lawyer's mood, and he was accustomed to unbend somewhat in her presence. Her inseparable companion and chosen confidant was a green-eyed gray cat she called Mary. These two now presented themselves before the man of law, the former bearing her master's tea, the latter demurely following.

"Well, Mistress Moll," he said, as the pair reached the table, "how has everything gone to-day?"

"Everything has gone completely, sir, completely,"

rejoined Molly Humstone, in a good, round voice. "Shall I pour your tea now, sir?"

"How is it as to strength, Molly?"

"It's got a good smack to it, sir. It's been steeping full ten minutes, and the little yellow Chinese never cooks theirs a bit. They know. You started drinking your tea stronger last November, and Mary and me's been moving up inch by inch from the five-minute we used to give you, till now you must have nothing but fifteen-minute. Ain't that so, lady?"

The old gray knowingly winked her eyes in response, and her mistress reiterated her remark.

"Yes," she said, "of course it is. Nothing in the world but fifteen-minute."

"Well, Moll," rejoined the lawyer in a tone which admitted of no reply, "if you and Mary will try to make it agreeable, I'll have it on a few moments longer: I've got to be busy to-night."

When Molly returned she found the lawyer already at work. While he was mechanically eating, he was very unmechanically reading from a document spread out upon the table at his left hand. The document was in his own handwriting, and bore in large letters at the top, the words:

"The Last Will and Testament of Reginald Moreland."

"It's strong enough to kill a cat, begging your pardon, sir," said Molly, proceeding to pour the fragrant beverage. "It cheers, but when taken in this deep color it inebriates."

"None too strong, none too strong," replied the lawyer absently, his eyes remaining fixed upon the paper before him.

Molly withdrew to the kitchen, and did not reappear until the man of law was ready for his corn-starch and cream. Of this dish, however, he took but a few spoonfuls, and then, throwing his napkin unfolded upon the table, arose.

"Ain't the pudding palatable, sir?" asked Molly, her

culinary pride touched by her employer's reception of her dessert. "Ain't it flavored well, sir?"

"Very well, Mistress Moll, very well," replied the lawyer, "but I'm not in the humor for sweets to-night. They clog the brain."

"It'll take more than that to overcome your fifteen-minute," rejoined Molly, only partially recovered from her miff. "One evil begets another. If you'd be satisfied with five-minute, you'd enjoy this starch. Fifteen-minute!"

"Molly, Molly," said the lawyer, as he opened the hall-door and stood with one foot on the stairs, "you certainly never will be killed for want of entertaining strong personal convictions." Then, closing the door, he added to himself, as he passed up the stairs, "Moll's a good one. I've let her have her own way and spoiled her perhaps in some particulars; but just let something happen that might happen, and Moll would bluff them until I was changed into Joe Collins and safely out of the house. She's just contrary enough for that. And then she has, I verily believe, a sort of notion that I am rather looking her way with a matrimonial eye. Dear, dear! But the idea won't hurt her usefulness. I'll encourage it."

Mr. Hardangle did not cease his upward journey with the first flight of stairs. He mounted a second flight and went into his bedroom. Here he drew a bunch of keys from his pocket and proceeded to unlock the closet door. Entering the closet, he selected another key from the bunch and opened the third drawer from the floor. This he examined with some care, and finding everything as he expected muttered to himself as he relocked it:

"It's just as well on such an evening as this to know that everything is all right, even if poor Moll would expire of curiosity if she knew I'd been in that locked closet. Lawyer Hardangle, allow me to introduce you to Joe Collins. I suppose I'd better try the trap, too."

The trap to which the lawyer referred was the trap-door in the ceiling of the closet, secured on the inside by

two bolts. He climbed up to it upon the projecting handles of the column of drawers and drew back the bolts from their staples. He then raised the trap from its resting-place sufficiently to assure himself that the hinges were in working order and that he could, if he so desired, turn it entirely out of his way on the attic floor. This accomplished, he slipped the bolts carefully back into their places, and left the closet with the muffled ejaculation :

"Now for it !"

As Mr. Hardangle put on his hat and passed out into the street, his injured housekeeper sat down in his chair at the table, drew a second chair for her cat, and prepared to eat her dinner. She ate in silence and fed gray Mary without a word, until both meals were nearly made. Then she poured herself a cup of tea, weakened it with hot water, and, as she slowly sipped it, addressed her furry messmate thus :

"It ain't no use, Mary-lady ; it can't be denied that such conduct is quite unendurable after our pains. He wasn't pleased to be pleased with either the tea or the pudding. And now, more than all that, unless I'm very much mistaken, he's been up in that locked closet of his. Absurd ! Here am I a housekeeper with full responsibility for the house's tidiness, and I haven't been allowed to go into that dirty little den in going on six months. It's filthy and it's vile, and I know it ! And yet if they think it teases me to have them talk about the lawyer being a bachelor and looking in the direction of a certain widow of forty-five, they're much mistaken. And if they do it just to hear themselves talk, and don't mean it, they're much mistaken again. I didn't marry poor Jimmy for nothing. I learned the ways of men more by marrying of poor dear Jimmy than by all other things I ever did. I hope I didn't deceive him, Mary, but I saw when he came a-courting of me, that if he was properly trained and managed he had the making of a good husband in him. And so I took him rather offish at first, then turned very sweet and yielding but came down on him pretty sharp along afterwards. Yes, I

learned the ways of men, and he learned something of the ways of women, though that's neither here nor there. The point is, that I am really quite convinced that one certain male heart is distantly longing to learn from one certain individual, more than any old bachelor knows about the ways of women. He'll let me say and do things to him which he'd snap any other body's head off for saying and doing. Well, well, more unlikely things have happened. Dear me! there's a knock at the back-door, and me at dinner yet."

Mrs. Humstone rose and went to the door.

"Why, Josey and Dolly!" she exclaimed, as the smiling faces of that loving pair greeted her from the entry. "So glad to see you! Mary and I are all alone. Come into the dining-room and have a bite, and a drop of tea. I'm late—absurdly late to-night. That man will be so irregular. Josey, how's this? Why ain't you up behind the old horse?"

"Well, now, Moll," replied the jolly cabby, seating himself beside his good-natured wife, "I'll tell you. Dolly and me—but you tell her, old girl."

"Why," said Dolly, "the way of it is that Josey and me have been talking it over, and he has decided to go out of the business. It's a rough-and-tumble trade, is cabbing it. And so Josey is only waiting for somebody to buy him out, and he only drives day-times. That's the way of it."

"Yes, that's it, old girl. And what next?"

"Why, next he's going into the grocery business," proceeded Dolly. "He's got his eye on a little store in Front Street, and he's going to start in there. We'll live over the store and have everything snug and tight."

"And," put in Josey, "if there's anything I can serve you and the lawyer with as well as not, why, give us a call, you know. And, by the way, sister, how is things anyhow?"

"What things, Josey?"

"Yes, indeed, what things, sure enough! Between you and boss Hardangle, of course."

"Absurd!" exclaimed Molly, with a show of mocking, but inwardly delighted. "Mr. Hardangle has never been much of a hand at marrying. We do have a pretty good understanding of each other, to be sure, and I am the trusted manager of the house, and we could be more unsocial without offence—occupying the positions we do. But—why, Josey, you must be going daft in your old age."

"Well, sister," rejoined Josey, smiling mischievously as he saw Molly's secret pleasure, "I ain't no prophet; but give me time enough and I can prophesy anything. So ten years from now, I'll feel perfectly safe in foresaying that you and the lawyer have been spliced together as tight as Doll and me. Hey, old girl? But let that be as it pleases; we all have our own opinions about it. Just now I want to tell you, Moll, something Doll and me lit on the other day in putting down a new carpet in our bedroom. Well, it was a pretty nice one, and as we didn't care to have it wear out any faster than needful, we got out a lot of old papers to lay under it. Now, Doll and me ain't been much readers, and as I was laying down one of the papers—but you tell her, old girl."

"As he was laying down the paper," joined in the obedient Dolly, "he happened to give a glance at an article in which it was put down how one Reginald Moreland had been taken one night in a cab to Water Street with his friend Lawyer Hardangle, and how he hadn't ever been heard of since."

"What did you say!" cried Molly, almost too much astonished to speak. "Is that the reason Mr. Moreland never comes here to dinner or of an evening, any more! Never been heard of since! Go on, Dolly!"

"And you mean to say that Jerry never told you anything about that!" exclaimed Josey. "I'd have supposed you'd have been the first one to know all about it, considering his feelings for you."

"No, of course I never heard about it!" rejoined Molly. "It's a shame for him to act so. Of course I

didn't know. If I had, don't you suppose I'd have told you before now? Go on, Dolly!"

"That's just what I was going to ask about," broke in Josey, interrupting his wife as she was beginning to speak. "I wondered, as soon as I saw it, how it was that you had forgotten to tell me such a piece of news. So you never heard it! Well, the first thing Doll knew, I looked up from my paper and cried out: Doll, I was in that murder! Of course she didn't know what I meant, and so I had to explain to her a little what I had been reading, and how old Doll-horse and me had taken two men——"

"You mean Mr. Hardangle and Mr. Moreland!" broke out the breathless Molly.

"That's what I reckon," replied Josey. "How me and Doll-horse had taken two men to Water Street on just about the date, as near as I could remember, that was put down in the paper; and how—but you tell, Doll."

"That's all there is," remarked Dolly, "except that I got all worked up and nervous and was sure old Josey would be took up, and to calm me down he just grabbed me in his arms and said: 'Now, old girl, don't you go and get nervy for nothing.'"

"It's a shameful outrage that I haven't been told this before!" cried Molly, influenced partially by a real sense of bereavement respecting a man who had always shown her kindness, and partially from disappointment that Mr. Hardangle had not shared his knowledge with her.

"Yes, that's just what it is. I used to keep things from James, but I never expected to be treated so myself, and I won't submit—sometime. Dear me! I'm all of a tremble to hear such a thing about Mr. Moreland; and it's come to me so sudden, too. And he's never been heard from since! How is that, Josey? Where did Mr. Hardangle go?"

"Well, now," answered Josey, "you're asking me just the things I expected you would know more about than I.

But I looked up the other papers then, and I found the following."

Then the good cabby went on to narrate how the men had parted at the lawyer's office, and all the subsequent events, so far as he had been able to glean them from the newspapers.

"And weren't the police put on the case?" asked Molly. "Didn't they find out anything afterwards?"

For a reply, Mrs. Humstone, received the information which all such inquirers received—detective Sargeant's verdict in the matter.

"And, oh, oh!" continued Molly, as her thoughts began to collect themselves, "Mrs. Moreland died—no doubt of the shock—and I never knew that her husband was dead before her. And the son was married—I knew that—and I supposing all the time that dear old Mr. Moreland was living with them. And only to think that my only brother should have driven him to his death! I ought to have been told before."

Supper being now ended, the dishes were soon washed and set carefully away in the cupboard, and Molly and her sister sat down for a good evening's gossip, while the whole-souled cabby, after a long day in the open air, was soon snoring a round answer to Mary's contented purr, quite oblivious to the destructive darts which his wife and sister were flinging back and forth over his head; and when the evening was over, nobody's character was one whit the sufferer for his honest repose.

## CHAPTER VII.

### ABOVE STAIRS.

From his own door Lawyer Hardangle wended his way to that of Robert Moreland. He was admitted to the library, shook hands in his coldly-cordial, business-like way with the newly-married couple, said he had brought his late client's will as agreed upon, and, with few more words, began to read it in his monotonous legal voice. It was a clear and unmistakable exhibition of the last wishes of the testator, in regard to the disposal of his various properties after his death. A detailed account of its provisions would be quite irrelevant. Suffice it to say that the great part of the vast estate was bequeathed to Reginald Moreland's widow and her only son, with the immaterial exception of a few hundreds to trusted servants here, and as many thousands to indigent relatives there; and with the more material exception of half a million which the testator bequeathed to his old friend and counselor-at-law, Jeremiah Hardangle.

"Now, in regard to the provision relating to myself, Mr. Moreland," said the lawyer when he had finished the reading, "it was, of course, against my will that it was inserted. Your father, however, would not listen to my objections, and so at last I submitted to his wish, but only because I saw that the easier method by which to accomplish my end, was to let him have his own way, and then, when the property came into my hands, to pass it along to you and yours. You will therefore be pleased to consider that provision as made in your favor instead of in mine."

"I am sure, Mr. Hardangle," replied Robert Moreland, "that I will be pleased to do no such thing. I would not

touch a penny of the bonds, even if I were poor for the want of them. Therefore, being very rich without them, I certainly shall not. They are not begrudged to you in the least, sir, and that you may believe me, I insist that you remain my friend and counselor as you were my father's."

Lawyer Hardangle seemed considerably surprised at this declaration, and after appearing to turn the matter over in his mind, he remarked:

"Your feelings in this matter are, as you can doubtless see, a profound surprise to me. I really had no other thought than that you would see the whole thing in my light, and allow me to return to you what—if I may use the expression without offence—one of my old friend's queer notions had bestowed upon me. However, now that you have expressed yourself so strongly, I can appreciate your sentiments and am able to understand that I should entertain similar ones were I in your case. But, Mr. Moreland, you must let your knowledge of your father's peculiarities have just weight with you, and render you willing to receive at my hands all but the merest remembrance—such as might be left by friend to friend."

"Mr. Hardangle," rejoined Robert Moreland very decidedly, "I am sure that we both thank you for your delicacy of feeling in this matter. But, sir, I cannot agree with you in the view you take of the reason for your receiving so large a remembrance from my father. Your friendship was, I believe, one of the sincerest joys of his life, as your opinion on any matter of law or business was his final rule of action. No, sir; when the impulsive and grateful disposition of the man are considered in the light of his deep regard for yourself, I must say that I see nothing but the most natural expression of my poor father's love and esteem for you, in the disposition of his property. I must, therefore, very firmly and decisively refuse to allow for a moment, your very unselfish and high-minded request."

"I am sure I thank you, Mr. Moreland," replied the

lawyer, "for the high opinion of my character which you are pleased to express. Nor shall I, knowing you for your father's son, insist upon my request. You speak of delicacy of feeling: I am sure none can exceed your own in deferring to so late a date the opening of the will. His death is now certainly assured. Yes, you are very wealthy. By your father's will, and in virtue of your mother's dying intestate, there are but few men in the city who can point to a longer roll of assets. Your mother, yourself, and I are mentioned as executors of the will. It was executed, as the date shows, about six months before your father's sad disappearance. In regard to the witnesses, your father's action was most characteristic. While we were engaged upon it last June, my brother-in-law, Matthew Marsh, and his son, Henry Marsh, both of Chicago, walked into my office, and a little later my brother Marius, who is not unknown to you, entered also. The idea occurred to your father that if these three would act as witnesses, the whole matter of the will might be taken from his hands then and there. So strongly did he press the matter that there was nothing for it but to accede to his wishes. These three names therefore appear in the document. Ten days after the will was executed, my brother-in-law and his son were crushed to death, as you perhaps remember, on their way home; and on the 28th day of last October, you will recollect that my brother was thrown down by one of his own trucks, sustaining injuries from which he never recovered. The witnesses are therefore (which is an exceedingly strange coincidence considering the shortness of the time), all dead before my client's decease. I urged upon him to procure other witnesses, and it was his intention to do so. His sudden end, however, intercepted his purpose. But, as I shall have no difficulty in procuring twenty men to swear to the signatures, this remarkable case of fatality will present no hindrance before the surrogate."

The matter of the will was soon satisfactorily out of

the way. Friendly discussions as to the character of the securities in which the young millionaire's fortune was invested followed, and the lawyer having named a time for Robert to call upon him at his office, bowed himself out of the house in the same business-like way in which he had entered. After he had gone, Florence Moreland turned to her husband and said earnestly :

"Robert, was your father such a warm friend of Mr. Hardangle?"

"In his way I think he was. He was, you know, a man of very great will and individuality, and that perhaps prevented his having many friends. Yes, they were as warm friends as two such men can be. Why do you ask?"

"Shall I tell you, Robert?"

"Why, of course. Why not?"

"Well, then, I will. I don't like Mr. Hardangle!"

"Don't like him!"

"No, Robert, I do not."

"You surprise me. To be sure Hardangle is very much of a business-man and not much given to demonstrativeness, but I never before heard a word against him. Why don't you like him?"

"Why, because—because he never changes his expression."

"Never changes his expression! That's too deep for me, my philosophical little wife. It hasn't anything to do with self-realization or anything like that, has it?"

"Please don't jest," returned Florence, "for I am in sober earnest. You will say that Mr. Hardangle smiles and is as affable as any one; and yet, to me, his expression never changes. I don't know that I ever noticed it so particularly before, but to-night I could notice nothing else. Whether he was reading or talking, and even when he smiled, it was always the same, stony, self-collected look. I never did like people who always seemed to be calculating with themselves, while one is engaged in conversation with them, and I never saw any one who did it so worryingly as Mr. Hardangle."

The conversation between Robert and his wife was still in progress when the lawyer re-entered his home. He encountered Molly in the hall, on her way to bed.

"Why, Molly," he said, with unusual spirit, "were you going off to bed without waiting for me to return? You and Mary ought to remember that I'm a bachelor without any relatives, and might get tired of living a single existence some day. Stranger things have happened."

"Whatever you may mean by your dark law-way of talking," answered Molly, well pleased, as she passed up the stairs, "this I do know; that such fifteen-minute as that, and such late hours will ruin your nerves and kill you before your time. And," she continued, pausing a moment to get breath on the first landing, "Mary and I saved that pudding for you, and we'll give it to you again to-morrow night."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE GIRL WITH THE BABY, THE MAN WITH THE MONKEY, THE LAWYER WITH THE VISOR.

THE day following Lawyer Hardangle's second attack upon Molly's pudding, the clock on the Tribune tower was engaged in a race with the time-piece on the City Hall to determine which should first be able to point the hour of five. Molly Humstone was returning from an errand which had called her down-town. Returning at such a rushing hour, what was more natural than that she should experience the delights of such an occasion? Delights they were, however, which to one of Molly's rather cumbrous proportions, were not of a very relaxing order. Indeed, her sensations of pleasure seemed to exist in inverse ratio to the number and compactness of the swarming fellow-beings which encompassed her on every side. As she stepped aside into a less crowded thoroughfare, and watched the mad throng go by, she gave voice to some pretty strong sentiments, which said in effect that to stay any longer in such a mess of over-grown boys, was to have herself reduced to a perfect jelly.

"Talk about corsets!" she continued, addressing a poorly-clad and unhappy-appearing young woman who chanced to be standing at her side holding a wee babe in her arms, "if any proud goose of a woman who is dissatisfied with the size that God has given her, and is so uncommon bright as to think she can improve upon the form which nature—who is a pretty fair sort of work-girl—has bestowed upon her, if any such foolish creature is anxious to squeeze herself out of shape in order to crowd and pull herself into the one deformity which Fashion has decreed the only proper one for that great thing man to

fall in love with, let her come down here a few afternoons, and she won't have to imperil her bedstead by hitching her laces fast to the posts. I'd like to see myself do that for either of my J's."

"Do you mean you've got two men?" asked the girl with the baby, turning a pair of great dark eyes upon Molly's flushed countenance.

"Do I mean I've got two what!" cried Molly Humstone.

"I thought you said you had two with names beginning with J, perhaps Jim and Jerry," rejoined the girl. "But you needn't get hot over it."

"Hot over it! Jim and Jerry!" gasped the widow. "How do you know it's them two? Me have two! Do you suppose I'd look at anybody else, if Jimmy, poor dear, wasn't dead and buried this long time! What kind of a person are you to think of such things? Mercy! are you one of those bad ones what I've heard about? Where do you live and where did you get that pretty little baby? It's yours, anyhow, for it's got your eyes."

"Keep your mouth shut, you nasty old thing!" snapped the young woman. "Is it your business to go around asking the mother of every child you see, where she got her baby from? Oh, there he goes!"

"Who goes?" asked the rather confused Molly, looking towards the passing throng, the sight of some one particular individual in which, had brought a momentary, sad brightness to the face of her companion.

"Who's gone, you better ask!" returned the girl. "Come, baby; we've got all we came for. I hope you won't be here to-morrow night, old prude, with your J's. If you are, I'll change to another place."

"You queer, bad creature," thought the virtuous Mrs. Humstone, as she slowly walked after the retreating girl and took a less crowded thoroughfare home. "Pretty and got a pretty baby, too. Goodness! I've often heard tell of such things but I never came so close to one before."

Mrs. Humstone had little more than arrived at her destination, and was just beginning preparations for the even-

ing meal, when a sharp rapping on one of the panes in the front sash, called her eyes quickly to the window. What was her surprise, as she turned, to see Mary who had been regaling herself with a peaceful nap, leap spitting from the casement, and scud into the kitchen, her tail as stout as a ship's hawser. At the same glance, Molly observed the cause of the energetic rapping. A mischievous young monkey was perched on the outer sill, holding in his paw a small, round, bright nugget with which he was ardently belaboring the glass. Molly gave vent to a slight scream as she caught sight of the unexpected apparition, and, running to the endangered pane, signified by vigorous gesticulations to the young man who held the monkey by a rope from the side walk, that the intruder's presence was no longer desired. The owner, a hard, dirty young man of perhaps two-and-twenty summers, drew the little fellow to him, but motioned Molly to raise the window. He had no need to prefer the request, however, for that lady, as soon as she saw the monkey safely perched upon his master's shoulder, lifted the sash with a will, and demanded what was intended by such a piece of impertinence.

"Why!" she exclaimed, "I wouldn't have had Mary suffer such a fright for all the horrid little monkeys in" (Molly's knowledge of geography and natural history being rather limited, and unluckily failing her in the midst of her castigation, she was forced to hesitate a moment before deciding upon the exact locality) "in—in Hoboken!"

With which good round finish to her righteous rebuke Molly seemed perfectly contented.

The young man on the curb must beg to be excused. He had meant no harm: had no intention of frightening either cats or women. He only wanted to do a favor. He had taken a great liking to the cat which Bumpo had disturbed, and thought he could train her to do tricks along of Bumpo. What would the lady take for puss? Would twenty-five cents be a consideration worthy of notice? Cats were very plenty, he said. Almost too plenty. Quite a drug on the market.

"Twenty-five cents!" fairly shrieked the outraged Molly. "Twenty-five cents to let you have my Mary, and take her to your dirty den somewhere, and abuse her, and beat her! Go on, go on! You've insulted Mary enough, and that's much the same as insulting the wife of the late James Humstone. But I say, hold on!" she continued, fixing her eye intently upon the young man, as if she had made an interesting discovery. "You must be her brother: I declare it. You're as like as two peas. I say, do you know whether you've got a sister, and whether she's capable of thinking that I could have two?"

"What is it to me whether you've got two sisters or not?" inquired the young man. "I'm offering you a good quarter for a cat."

"Sisters!" returned Molly paying no heed to the bid. "Who said anything about sisters? What harm would there be in having as many sisters as you'd been provided with? No, it wasn't sisters, it was men. Have you got a sister and could she think Molly Humstone would have two?"

The youth allowed he had once had a sister. He was utterly unable to say whether he was still in possession of such a relation or not. He had not been much of a fellow to lie around home. But it wasn't sisters now, it was cats. Did the lady think he abused things? Was he cruel to animals? Just let Bumpo show her the way he was taken care of. Would she have a look at the fine scarf-pin he wore at his neck—the same thing he had tapped on the window with? That would prove whether things were abused or not.

Without waiting for permission the little beast was started on his way. With all his agility, however, he did not reach the window before Molly had closed it with a crash. The little fellow sat down soberly on the sill, and proceeded to divest himself of his "scarf-pin," and Molly summoned sufficient courage to draw near enough to the window to examine it. It proved to be a very handsome jeweled button, evidently of much value, over whose

golden surface a tiny serpent twisted itself into the shape of the capital letter W. After Molly had examined it as long as she cared, she motioned the young man to recall his pet.

"Where did you get that from?" she inquired.

"Never mind where I got it from. I don't know as it's anybody's business to go around and ask every man they see with a scarf-pin, where he got it from. Will you or won't you look at a good whole quarter for so common a thing as a cat?"

Molly Humstone decisively stated that she would not, and the discomfited youth started off declaring that he had no further business with "no Humstones, or Beef-bones, or whatever outlandish name it was."

Mrs. Humstone had agreed with herself to embrace the opportunity afforded by Mr. Hardangle's dinner to bring him to account for his conduct in hiding from her all knowledge of the dreadful fate which had overtaken Reginald Moreland. After the lawyer had come in, therefore, and taken his place at the table, she entered the room and said:

"I'd like to ask you a question, Mr. Hardangle."

"Let us hear it by all means," returned the man of law.

"Do you know my brother, Mr. Hardangle?"

"I have not had that pleasure."

"Well, he knows you. He's a cab-driver."

At the mention of that word, and by reason of Molly's significant tone and manner, the lawyer's face became a perfect blank. Then he complacently repeated, as if only building a step for his housekeeper to place the foot of her next remark upon:

"He is a cab-driver——"

"And," Molly went on, making use of the rising inflection, "unless he's much mistaken, he once drove you in his cab."

"Yes?"

"Yes," continued Molly, "he is very sure that he took you and your friend "(Molly grew slower, and slower and

more and more replete with hidden significance) "Mr. Moreland down to Water Street—on the night—that he, poor soul!—disappeared forever from view!"

Not a muscle in Lawyer Hardangle's countenance moved. His visor was tightly closed. Much to the chagrin of his charging foe, he gave no evidence of being even a little fluttered.

"I see, Molly," he said, "that you do not like my not telling you about Mr. Moreland's disappearance. Well, Mistress Moll, all I've got to say is: *Stranger things have happened.*"

Molly felt the keenness of the retort as if it had been a pointed weapon, and swept out into the kitchen without another word.

"That's the last time I'll ever mention that subject to him, Mary-lady," she remarked to her gray, as they sat down to their evening meal after the lawyer had betaken himself to his library. "All men don't seem to be alike, lady. In a word (mark me, lady), some men make good husbands—and some men make good wives!"

About half an hour later the lawyer came to the head of the stairs, and summoned Mrs. Humstone to attend upon him in his library.

"Sit down, Molly," he said, laying aside his paper very leisurely and motioning his housekeeper to a chair. "I want to talk to you. I have felt for some time—to come right at the business in hand—that there was growing up between us a sort of secret and unexpressed understanding upon a certain subject, of which subject I have at times hinted to you that stranger things might easily occur."

"Well," rejoined Molly, uneasily, "well, Mr. Hardangle, I'm sure I have no way of determining what you mean by your dark way of talking around things; but of one thing I am sure, and that is, that I'd rather have a man say nothing at all to me than go hinting and beating about bushes, and never saying anything but in hints and beats."

"Molly," rejoined the man of law, "I have not fol-

lowed the law all my life, and been a close observer of the strengths and weaknesses of human nature during that same period, to sit here now and say that I cannot read the inmost feelings of the heart as they stand written upon that strange bulletin, the face."

"I'm not thinking anything that I should be at all ashamed to have Mary know, or anybody else," stammered Molly.

"No, of course you're not, Moll," returned the lawyer, "I don't suspect you of it. You're surely too open to be thinking one thing and saying another. No, what you are pondering upon is perfectly honorable and very natural. It is what women from the time of the fall down through all the romances and fairy tales until now, have at some period of their lives thought upon no less anxiously than yourself. In other and plainer words, Molly, the thoughts of womankind, in a far greater degree than those of her opposite in sex, are under the control of her heart. And, still more plainly, my ability to read the thoughts and intents of the human heart and mind, has revealed to me with unfailing accuracy, that for some time past, your intellect has been under the sway of your affections. Your heart, Molly, has set itself upon a mate. It is needless for me to inform you that I am aware that said mate is a lawyer; nor is the mention of names at all necessary. All that is needful I now proceed to attend to. And first: Said man of law is not displeased to know himself the chosen object. Second: It is his intention one day to discard the lonely life of a bachelor. Third: When he does so, he is determined to share his fortune with none other than a certain widow. Fourth: This may be next year, or it may be a score of years from the present time. Fifth: The will and testament of aforesaid lawyer will be drawn up in favor of foregoing widow, so that in case of the decease of the bachelor, the widow will come into possession of the whole of his estate. Sixth: There having been no mention of names there is no call for demonstrations of any character."

"I am sure I am very grateful," Molly began, "and I hope——"

"Moll," broke in Mr. Hardangle, "I said that there was no call for demonstrations of any kind."

"But," persisted Mrs. Humstone, "I feel that this is a time (poor, dear James felt it so) when we both——"

"Molly, it is my wish that nothing more be said to-night. I should like to be alone." And Lawyer Hardangle resumed his evening paper.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE CROWDED ONES.

THE glowing, glaring, staring summer days—with what mocking extremes do they come laden! In their right hand, for the children of Wealth, smiling blessings and sweet promises of rest and renewed life, among the cool recesses of shaded mountain-sides, or within reach of the invigorating breezes which blow shoreward over the expanse of the great gray sea. In their left hand, for the squalid offspring of Poverty, feverish curses and burning prophesies of death—unfortunates, whose only mountain-side shall be that which their own rude coffins erect upon the deck of the commissioner's boat, and whose only sea-breeze that which shall whisper sighingly over their still forms as they take their first and last excursion—to the Potter's Field! Alas! poor crowded ones. Born to be crowded in life, and now, under the sod, piled shoulder to shoulder, one above another—and the grave-diggers work overtime! From baking tenement, from thronged hospital, from still morgue, from the dark water's embrace, and from noisome pest-holes thick with disease, hither they come—and the grave-diggers work overtime! Oh, ye pitying angels of Heaven, when ye come forth as reapers at the last day, and the abodes of the dead give up their hosts, have especial mercy upon those who rise from crowded graves!

The annual depopulation of the homes of the upper-classes was for the most part completed by the time Robert Moreland and his young wife returned from their bridal tour. Of all those who could show just cause for leaving the city for the heated weeks, and sufficient means

to afford it, few could surpass Philip Maitland. He had lately concluded a course of hard study, and his bank account would have rendered many less self-forgetful young men both vain and slothful. Yet Philip intrusted his mother and two small sisters to the care of Robert Moreland and his wife, and refused to accompany them to their beautiful summer-home at East Hampton. Upon leaving seminary he had put into immediate operation a resolve which he had long cherished, to devote his life and means to ameliorating the condition of the down-trodden and degraded classes that were madly struggling for the breath of life about the lowest bases of existence in his native city ; and to have deserted his post during these glowing, glaring, staring summer-days of death, would have been little in keeping with the character of Philip Maitland. Philip remained in the city, and these days of distress and death saw him daily, often nightly, with youthful zeal laboring with his own hands, and pouring out his own wealth to alleviate the awful condition of the "crowded ones." And now, as he could not have imagined, the seamy side of life began to reveal all its hideous features to his yearning eye. One after another, the frowzy, drunken, filthy, blear-eyed, representatives of poverty and crime passed before his astonished and outraged sight, until, at times, he was forced to turn away from them, from sheer sickness of mind and body. That dull content of animal life, begotten of the brute existence which they lived, and which rendered his most earnest efforts so often unavailing ; that crushed and ambitionless habit of thought which wrote despair on so many blank countenances from which all ideas beyond the supply of pressing bodily wants had utterly vanished ; grimy hands and faces, the natural consequence of a shocking scarcity of water and an omnipresent filth ; herds of shrieking, half-naked, blotched and pale-faced children tumbling at every open door ; young girls, shameless and flippant, with one foot already slipping into Hell ; young men with restless, brazen faces, seducing and being

seduced ; middle-aged men whose loftiest dreams did not rise above successful thieving and unlimited whiskey ; middle-aged women, foul and unkempt, the mothers and trainers of the rising generation of vice ; men and women, prematurely old, whose life's candle, dimly flickering, soon burned to the socket by the uncertain drafts of want and sin ; and above and below and around everything, stench, stench, intolerable stench—all these went to make up the environment in which Philip Maitland passed his summer days.

Philip had been acquainted all his life with the annual outings of the well-to-do classes : he now was brought face to face for the first time with the outings of the poor. And very different he found them ! That of the rich consists in getting out of the city ; that of the poor in getting out of their dwellings—the one grand incentive being need of the breath of life. Accordingly, as the days went on, Philip beheld a very sadly interesting sight—the transfer of the tenement thousands from the inside to the outside of their walls. During the day, this tendency to expansion sent women with their babies and ragged urchins with their kites, to the flat roofs. Lazy men sought the shady corners and low groggeries ; and small armies of children of uncertain parentage, beset the gutters and wharves like so many rats, where the loss of two or three was hardly noted, much less lamented. In the evening loud factory girls and half-drunken young men put in a licentious claim to their share of top-room, and the population of the streets below was variously entertained by savage fights often ending in bloodshed ; by angry brawls between rival housewives ; and now and again by the sight of some dogged offender brought to his senses by nearly losing them under the heavy night-club of some stalwart officer of law and order. As bed-time drew on, the roofs, in common with doorsteps, window-sills and iron balconies, were transformed into promiscuous sleeping-apartments, vastly preferable to the stifling, burning holes within ; although, as a natural outcome of

this sort of outing, the shocked and incredulous Philip, more than once chanced upon dead babies, dead men, dead women, lying mutilated and bloody in his path, whose beds had proved too narrow and crowded to hold them till morning. Thus casualty followed close upon the heels of miasm, and death, a great unseen spectre, dealing out poison shafts with implacable and unerring fury, brooded everywhere; until, among all this seething mass of humanity there was scarcely a house where there was not one dead.

As to the success of the summer's labors, it was such as a zealous, untiring man could accomplish whose whole heart and soul were in his work. By slow degrees, one and another began to respond to his uplifting touch; and clearer, more hopeful faces in this alley and that dark lane, bore evidence to the faithfulness of his endeavors. But such deeds as Philip wrought are in secret, quite unapplauded, and in secret let them remain. We pass on to make mention of one trifling incident in which he had a share, and which he afterward found was pregnant with most unforeseen and staggering results.

One evening in the latter part of August, as he was returning home after a muggy day, his attention was caught by a small gathering of excited urchins collected about a tiny infant crying upon the doorstep of a battered tenement.

"What's the matter, children?" he inquired.

"A little kid drapped by a walker-one," cried two or three high voices.

"How long ago?"

"Two, tree min'ts."

"Run after her and see if you can't overtake her."

The little fellows dashed off with a will, but soon after returned from a fruitless chase.

"Clean skipped," they explained with crestfallen countenances.

"Oh, the dear little think!" exclaimed a kindly voice, which proceeded from a middle-aged woman, closely

veiled, who found the gathering obstructing her passage on the sidewalk. "Where did it come from, sir?"

"The children say it was dropped here," replied Philip.

"Poor little creetur!" continued the woman, taking it in her arms. "I'll be mother to you myself, and have you for company, for I'm rightly lonely since they've gone. There, there, don't cry so! Why, you has got a cute face with you."

"Yes, take the child," said Philip, pleased with the woman's voice and manner, although he could not discover her face under her close veil. "And here," he added, offering her two five-dollar bills, "take this to help you. I judge from your bundle that you make your living by sewing, and cloaks and pants don't command a great price."

Could Philip have pushed aside the screening veil he would have seen a sudden look of firm resolve spread itself over the gentle countenance behind it.

"You means it well, sir," she said, motioning back the proffered charity. "Stitchin' do come plenty low, sir, but I never yet took nothink from no one."

So saying, she picked up a bundle which she had laid on the doorstep, and taking the baby in her arms trudged away to her lodgings, while Philip continued his homeward way, thinking.

"So that's your game, is it?" muttered a shrill little man in very ill-fitting clothes, who had been carefully keeping himself out of Philip's sight on the other side of the street during this episode, but was now returning from the key-hole of the door through which the woman with the child had just passed to her attic home. "So that's your scheme and game, Rachel Underwood! How fortunate I was to have looked you up and followed you upon this especial and particular evening. Yesterday or to-morrow would have been just one day out of the way for the prey. Mag, alias Madame Guillon, the Mother, shall know of this. So, ho!"

## CHAPTER X.

### A MAD CLIENT.

If any of the friends and relatives of Reginald Moreland were dissatisfied with the manner in which his last will and testament disposed of his extensive personal and real possessions, Mr. Hardangle, at least, heard no complaints indicative of such displeasure. The summer passed for Philip Maitland in the slums, and for his kinsmen at the shore ; the fall afternoons began to shorten, and the nights to slip quickly in after the days ; and still no murmur of discontent reached the lawyer's ears. But Mr. Hardangle's peace was destined to be sorely disturbed. The dull, bleak November days were again enveloping everything in inhospitable chill, when, upon the very anniversary day of Reginald Moreland's mysterious disappearance, as the daylight was fast hurrying away after the departed sun, a young woman, who evidently had once been pretty and who still would have been pretty, but for the sunken and haggard appearance of her cheeks and a certain wild, unnatural look burning in her large dark eyes, presented herself to Mr. Silas Slack, in Mr. Hardangle's waiting-room. Her head was uncovered, her dress was tattered, and she wore a small red-plaid shawl over her shoulders. Mr. Slack, looking upon the restless face before him in the gathering dusk, immediately recognized it.

"And who shall I say wants to see Mr. Hardangle?" he suavely inquired.

"Rachel Underwood," replied the young woman in a half-dazed, half-desperate voice.

Mr. Slack having duly announced "Miss Underwood," and the lawyer having replied, "Ask her to come in," the young woman entered the main office with a quick, nerv-

ous step, as if she had been fretting under the short delay imposed upon her. Mr. Slack closed the door behind her, and dutifully took his stand by the little closet just outside of it. He heard the young woman inquire in a high voice whether she were addressing Mr. Hardangle, and the lawyer assure her that she was.

"Well, then," the young woman went on, "what does it all mean?"

"What does what mean?" asked the lawyer, wondering at the strange and abrupt manner of her speech. "Be seated and try to speak calmly."

"Calmly!" cried the young woman, scornfully rejecting the proffered chair. "Calmly! I don't know what you say. But I do want to know what it all means!"

"You are very much excited over something," replied the lawyer, beginning to have his suspicions of his questioner's mental soundness. "You must try to calm yourself and speak intelligently. My time is too precious to be wasted."

"Well, then, don't look at me as if you thought I was mad, and I will. And I will, and I will—what did you ask me?"

"I asked you nothing," replied the man of law, plainly seeing that the young woman was mentally unbalanced. "I merely said that you must speak so I could understand you. You want to know what what means?"

"Of course I did. Why shouldn't I? And you won't tell me. But you must. (I do feel so queer in my head, that I seem to keep forgetting! I don't know what's the matter.) Why shouldn't I? Why don't you tell me how it is? He was going to leave it enough to make it a rich man or woman, whichever it should be, and there wasn't a word about it. Tell me, tell me, or I shall go mad!"

There was a pitiful pathos in the poor creature's distracted manner, in her broken mind so eagerly endeavoring to make itself understood, that it must have touched with the deepest compassion, a heart susceptible of such a sensation; but had Florence Moreland been watching

Mr. Hardangle's countenance, as he stood looking upon the young woman before him, she would have noted with a shudder that no slightest expression of inward emotion passed upon it save, perhaps, one of curiosity. That his visitor was demented he had no doubt; but that she had something to say to him which it might be of importance for him to know, he also did not question. He therefore sought to assist her to make herself intelligible as well as he could.

"Now," he said, slowly, "Miss Underwood, just stop where you are, and try again more calmly. Who promised to leave money?"

"Why, *he* did of course. And you won't tell me how it was!"

"You are still uncalmed, Miss Underwood. Who is he?"

"Who is he? Why, why—let me see. What were we talking about? Oh! Mr. Moreland's will. Mr. Moreland is he. I used to work in his house. How did it happen? How did you get it out of him? Enough money to make it rich, and there wasn't a word about it."

"You refer to Reginald Moreland's will, I suppose," said the lawyer, supremely astonished but outwardly unmoved.

"Yes, to him that was murdered. You knew it all the time. I tell you I'm going mad, mad, mad! What was I going to say? My head is so queer!"

"You said Mr. Moreland had promised to leave your child money," prompted Mr. Hardangle. "Who and what is your child?"

"I sha'n't tell you! He's mine and I won't tell anybody! Let me see. Oh, yes. Enough to make it rich. How did you get it out of him? I knew he was going to do it—I knew it! I'm bound to know what it means—if I can remember to ask you."

"Why should he leave your child money?" asked the man of law, quite oblivious to the scene of misery before him.

"That's my business, not yours!" cried the young woman,

"Was the name of your child's father Robert Moreland?" persisted the lawyer.

"I tell you I won't tell!" again shrieked the young woman.

"Tell me, then, why you come to me. Did Mr. Moreland say you were to get your money here?"

"I was to go to him as long as he lived, but he's dead. It was all in the papers. And you got it all for yourself."

"Oh, you learned about me in the papers. But after he died was he to leave me money to give you as you needed it?"

"I didn't say so. I was to go to the son. Stop asking me!"

"Why don't you go to him, then?"

"I say he's dead. Stop!"

"No, no, not the father, the son. Why not go to the son?"

"Because you got it out of him, and there's nothing to get. Besides, I don't want to."

"That's because he's the father of your child, I suppose."

"It ain't! Stop looking at me as if I was crazy! Do you hear! If you don't, I will go mad, and then they'll come and put me in a mad-house. Go away, I say! I won't go! Who says I'm mad? Leave me alone!"

Surely this mournful exhibition must have moved the counsellor. But no. He watched the poor thing draw herself away into a corner, and wildly endeavor to drive from her with extended arms, the phantoms of her own disordered mind's creation; but if there was any unusual expression upon his mask-like countenance, it was one of triumph and not of compassion. Astonished and disturbed by what he had heard, he quickly seized the opportunity which his shrewdness presented to him, and cruelly improved it. He stepped resolutely toward the cowering girl (giving tangible form to her mental fancies), and, grasping her roughly by the arm, hissed into her ear:

"Mad-house, mad-house! Of course they'll take you!"

"Go away!" shrieked the poor victim, vainly struggling

to free herself from the lawyer's grasp. "I'm not mad! Let me go to my baby!"

"Let you go to hell!" again hissed the man of law. "Mad-house, mad-house!"

The girl trembled and shook in his clutch like a dry leaf in an autumn's gale. He saw that his attempt was a victory. Loosening his hold of her arm, he stood a moment fiercely menacing her with his powerful eye. Then he suddenly changed his front, and spoke to her in a quiet, kindly voice.

"Poor thing!" he said. "You're so mad."

"I'm not! Go away!" returned the young thing, disconcerted by the quick transformation in the lawyer's manner towards her.

"Yes, yes, very mad," continued her tormentor, calmly. "And it's too bad for one so young to have to go to a mad-house. So young and pretty!"

"I'm not, I say! Let me go to my baby!"

"Too, too bad! The little thing can never see its mother any more."

"I will go! Stop holding me with your eyes!"

"But don't you really think you're very mad?"

"You know I'm not! Stop holding me!"

"Then why will you act in such a way that they think so and must take you?"

"I don't! I'm not mad! They sha'n't take me! Stop holding me!"

Again the lawyer altered his tactics. He suddenly reached out his arms and seized the young woman's shrinking shoulders.

"Girl!" he muttered, "listen to me. You're not mad, you're only excited. They shall not take you—I won't let them. You're not mad, but you act so. Listen to me," and he tightened his grasp upon the bony shoulders. "I thought you were mad, because you came here and talked in such a strange way about Reginald Moreland. They thought you were mad, because you came here and talked in such a wild way about Reginald Moreland. Listen!

If they ever hear you talking in such strange way about Reginald Moreland again, they'll know that you really are mad, and they'll come, and they'll take you to the mad-house, mad-house, mad-house!"

The young woman cowered and trembled, but said nothing. The lawyer bent his face down until it almost touched hers, and again hoarsely repeated:

"If you ever again talk in that strange, wild way about Reginald Moreland, they'll hear you, and they'll cart you off. And then it will be mad-house, mad-house, mad-house, until you're dead and buried!"

"Let me go!" pleaded the young woman.

"Yes, you shall go. But before you go let me warn you once more, that if they ever hear you talking in this strange way about Reginald Moreland, it will be mad-house, mad-house, mad-house, and it will be mad-house, mad-house, mad-house!"

Lawyer Hardangle walked to the door. When he opened it he found Mr. Slack quietly looking out of the window intently watching the passing throng below.

"Silas," he said, "will you show this young woman down to the street?"

Rachel Underwood quietly accompanied Mr. Slack in an absent, bewildered manner. When they had reached the bottom of the stairs, her guide turned to her and slyly inquired:

"Would you give me your address, Miss?"

His charge looked at him a moment in her dazed, unheeding way, and then brightening a little, replied:

"The Streets, New York."

With which reply, she made her way out into her crowded home, muttering:

"Mad-house, mad-house, mad-house! I feel so queer!"

When Mr. Slack returned to the office he found his employer preparing to leave it for the night. He hurried on his own coat and hat, therefore, and prepared to depart also.

"A poor, crazy girl," remarked Mr. Hardangle indifferently as he locked the door.

"Very light in the head—the upper story," agreed Mr. Slack.

Mr. Hardangle turned up the street. Mr. Slack returned the lawyer's good-night and turned down the street. As he passed along on his homeward way, he communed thus with himself:

"*Mister* Hardangle, be it known by these presents, ladies and gentlemen. Hardangle Esquire. Much respected. Suspicions? No end of them. Poor, crazy thing is she? All I hope is that she hasn't changed her place of residence since the time she dropped the kid. I wish she would have told me something besides The Streets; though she'll probaby return soon. I, too, wonder what it all means. If the Turner at Law hadn't spoken his part in such a sneaking, low tone, I might have had to wonder less!"

While Mr. Slack's mind was engaged in following out this rich vein of reflection, his employer's thoughts also were pursuing the bent given to them by Rachel Underwood's visit.

"That was strange. It was terrific! Just what's the truth about it all, I'd give a good deal to know. She was as crazy as any loon, but I can't think she would have come to me unless there was something in it. Can that something be that young Robert was in her debt? From her manner and her words, I really incline to such an opinion. I must try to find out: the knowledge might some day prove useful. She worked in the family, that might account for Moreland's promising her money without any dark deeds, but as I look at it, it only serves to strengthen my suspicions. Did he promise her money at all? I rather think he did, and that he meant to have it added to the will before he died. Or it may be that she went to him for it and he refused, but in her present state of mind she believes he agreed to do it. I should have been just as well pleased if she hadn't got me mixed up in her crazy notions. For, though she can know nothing about the past, and I really would have nothing to fear from her

demented talk, yet it would not add to my peace of mind to imagine her talking. There's no telling how much she's been saying already, but I'm of the opinion that she won't have much more to say after that mad-house scare. It was quite an interesting psychological experiment. You conducted yourself well, Jeremiah Hardangle. Robert Moreland, with your pretty young wife, have I found out your secret?"

"Gone!" muttered Silas Slack, issuing from a high, frame tenement which he had entered on his homeward way. "Gone! but I will find her. That was a queer dose—a queer dose. I will find you, Rachel Underwood. I know where your child is, and, if I don't know what it is, I'm exceedingly mistaken. There's things hidden and concealed here which I must probe to the bottom, whether my honesty compels me or not. Gone!—curses on the luck!"

## CHAPTER XI.

### HOW MAG CAN BECOME MADAME.

About seven o'clock of the following evening, Mr. Slack was stealing his way up the stairs of a certain battered tenement. It was the same building from which he was seen to issue upon that sultry August evening when the woman with the kindly voice and bundle of sewing, took into her heart and home the little foundling which Philip Maitland had discovered crying upon the doorstep. Creeping to the fourth floor of the tenement, he entered a small, public apartment, and peered through a crack in the wall into the room before him. He maintained this position for not more than a minute, and evidently to his complete satisfaction, for he glided down into the street again and walked away at an unusually brisk pace. The gait at which he moved soon brought him to a large, imposing mansion, whose brown-stone front and door of oak and glass were eminently respectable. He made his way to the rear of the house, and, without the ceremony of knocking, entered the back-door. Within the door he lighted upon a number of servant-girls variously employed about a spacious kitchen, not one of whom offered the slightest objection to his informal entrance.

"Madame home?" he inquired.

"In the office," was the reply volunteered by one of the girls.

Toward the office, without more words, Mr. Slack directed his steps, and quite unannounced opened the office-door and stood before a woman of perhaps thirty-five years, who was seated busily writing at a secretary.

"Ha, Silas! I thought it must be you," said the woman, turning her dark face, dark hair, heavy dark eyebrows, and

dark, piercing eyes towards Mr. Slack, and speaking in a low, not unmusical voice. "Not one of the servants would dream of coming to me in such an unceremonious manner. Familiarity breeds contempt. But I haven't seen you in quite a dog's age."

"Think again, and see if you're sure you haven't," piped Mr. Slack. "Oh, you Mag, you, you're such a proud one! Think hard now while I lie back in this easy-chair, and be sure you haven't seen and beheld me within a week."

"Within a week!" echoed the woman. "Why, I haven't seen you in some months."

"Oh, you Mag, you!" exclaimed Mr. Slack again. "I'm free to say I don't relish your pride. I suppose you didn't see me the other day, as I was crossing the Avenue?"

"Why, Silas, of course I didn't," replied the woman. "You must think my memory is rapidly leaving me. Don't you suppose I'd remember if I'd seen you?"

"Oh, you're memory's all right, as many a poor chap knows to his grief and sorrow. 'Tain't your memory that's in fault, nor is it your optical eyes. It's your pride, you Mag. You saw me nodding and smiling at you, well enough. But you, perched up in your big turn-out, behind your yellow-legged driver, you didn't want to have those others know that I was in your acquaintance. Oh, you Mag! Time was when it was I that had to stoop to notice you. Madame Guillon ain't a very old woman compared with Mag Slack. You haven't got any cause and reason to be proud, you Mag! Don't the police know you though! Don't they know what a goer you've been! Don't they know how you've climbed up round by round? Don't they know how you've been a nurse and a physician by turns? Don't they know how they've taken you up as a vagrant? Don't they know the shady kind of business you carry on behind your fine curtains, and your brass knob? Oh, they know; and they laugh in their sleeves when they see how smart you've been. But I say,

you don't need to be proud, and I don't like your high-stepping ways."

"Who sent you here to lecture me?" asked Mr. Slack's sister, aroused by her brother's harsh words. "What if I didn't choose to know you? If you don't like it, why, hang you, you can do the other thing! Just because you and I happen to be foaled in the same hovel is no reason why you should come here and tell me nothing I didn't know before. If you don't like my high ways, you do like my high pay, and, ten to one, you've come here for more now."

"Well, well, Mag," said Mr. Slack in a mollified voice, "don't let's get mad. We're of too much use to each other, you know. Yes, I did come for my pay—honesty to my family compelled me. And let me see: you gave me ten to watch her when she left, and promised me ten now and again, to keep my eye on the child. Well, I've had my eye on it not as much as an hour ago. She got tired of it about three months since, and where she's skipped to, I don't know. But the child is being cared for by—I know whom. It's business, you know, to keep the exact place to myself, just as it's yours to keep the father's name to yourself, having wormed it out of her; though I'm another if I don't guess and imagine who it is."

"Keep it to yourself, if you like—I'm sure I don't care," rejoined Madame Guillon. "No more do I care if you've found out the father's name. You know whose favor my will is made out in, and you know all too well that I'd ship you and give you no more business at this stand, if you fooled with him. What I do care to know is whether the little brat bids fair to make out to live."

"Very fair, very fair; it's in first-rate hands," replied Mr. Slack. "Good, sober woman. She picked it up a few minutes after its mother and parent deposited it upon a certain doorstep, all which I took to be a plan and scheme of Miss Underwood's. When you draw upon the gentleman remember I come in for my commission. How is business nowadays, anyhow, Mag?"

"Good, Silas; never better," answered Madame. "The police and the parsons combined don't seem likely to clear me out yet awhile. Here's your ten dollars, Silas. I don't say you haven't earned it, and I don't say you haven't earned it easily. You're likely to get quite a number of them, because, being flush, I sha'n't call on this one very soon. I don't want to scare him too soon. He may be a good advertisement for me among the big guns. Long head, you see, Silas. They say it's hard times now, outside of the home."

"And who says and declares it, says and declares the truth," observed Mr. Slack with some emphasis. "It's the same old story, Maggie: The rich growing richer and the poor growing poorer. Oh, Mag, Mag, they are grinders every one! Confound and blast it, Mag, you are a shrewd one! It's always hard times outside, but never inside."

"Exactly, Silas, exactly. You're as right as a lawyer when he makes an extra effort to tell a lie—stumbles into the truth, you know. Yes, it's always good times behind my fine curtains—and they are fine, Silas, and my pictures are, too. Art, real art. Perhaps I'm shrewd, and perhaps I'm not; though goodness knows that I've been through enough in my time to make me as keen as an east wind. At any rate, there's one thing that has no 'perhaps' in it, and that is my ability to give points to certain ones on the proper method of getting on in the world. Not to the police, Heaven knows! And, as to the politicians, you might as well try to give pointers to the Devil himself. And that's just the word I meant to use. The reason it's never hard times in here is that I was smart enough to see and profit by his method. I got into a business which was supported by men's love of pleasure and self-indulgence. That's his trick, and the police and the politicians come by it naturally. But the school-teachers and the parsons ain't in it. They don't give men what they want, but what they're set to give. And what's the result? Operas, with pretty girls, full: churches,

with ugly debts, empty. Ah, Silas, there isn't a priest in the city but would tuck up his sacred robes, if he passed me on the street, and avoid me as he would the plague —at least, if any one was looking. But let them take my advice for a single season, and they'd never own up to their best friends what fools they'd been before. But we're in the trick, Silas, so here's your money. Holloa! there's the bell. More cash for both of us, perhaps, Silas. If you listen at the door, you'll see how I work them."

Madame Guillon turned down the gas in the room where she and her brother were seated, and allowing the individual whom the maid had admitted to "the little, dark room on the left," sufficient time to find a chair, rose and softly glided into the apartment. Mr. Slack, being as much of an adept at listening at doors as was consistent with his pre-eminent virtue, followed his Parisian sister as far as the crack.

"I am speaking with Madame Guillon?" inquired the caller.

Could Mr. Slack believe his ears! His heart beat high with a sudden sense of triumph and secret advantage. The voice which made the inquiry was none other than that of his respected employer, Jeremiah Hardangle. Mr. Slack pressed his ear to the crack that not a single word might escape him.

"You are speaking with none other," he heard his sister make answer.

"I have then, a particular question to ask you," the man of law remarked. "For the information, I will, of course, pay you what is right. Did you ever, to your knowledge, have any dealings with any one by the name of Robert Moreland?"

"Have I inquired your name, sir?"

"You certainly have not, Madame."

"Your case is no exception, sir. I may have had dealings with a hundred men of the name you mention; but if I had, their names were as unknown to me as is your own. Why, yours may be Moreland for anything I know

to the contrary, and this may all be a game on your part to discover whether the privacy which this house boasts is merely a vaunt and at the service of a bribe. You may know beyond a doubt that I have or have not done business for some Moreland."

"What sum would tempt you, madame?"

"Five thousand dollars would not be a consideration."

"And five hundred would be ten times more than I would offer you. I'm sure enough you did, anyway. I only wanted to make assurance doubly sure. I shall not be seen as I go out?"

Oh! you house of respectable appearance, how many times that inquiry has been made in the little dark room on the left!

"By none unless by the maid who admitted you, and she's as blind as a bat. I am sure I have no desire to observe your appearance. Why should I?"

"Because you generally like to know the faces of those who call on you here, and when I am gone, I leave nothing behind me by which such information can be obtained. I bid you good-night."

Before Madame Guillon could reply or repel the insinuating remark, her caller had his hand on the knob and was leaving the house, saying within himself:

"I really don't need to know positively. In case of trouble I could tie his hands with an assumption."

"Well, Silas, there wasn't much money in that for either of us, was there?" remarked Mr. Slack's sister, turning up the gas again and resuming her seat at the secretary. "If all who came to me were upon similar errands, it would soon be as hard times inside as outside, I'm thinking."

"Of which there seems to be no immediate danger," replied Mr. Slack. "Oh, you Mag, you're a shrewd one! Your trade don't hang and depend upon Democrats or Republicans, Free Trade or Protection. But I say, Maggie, that fellow, whoever he was, was on to your ways; hey, Sister Maggie? And if you didn't see him

you know this much about him : you know he's no milky and sappy greenhorn. What ! another bell, Maggie ? "

"That's for me to go upstairs, Silas. I've been expecting it every minute."

That night, Madame Guillon, before she locked up her secretary, took from it a large blank-book, and, like any bookkeeper, hunted out the name of Moreland, and made the following entry :

"November 24. This night a call from a gentleman who talked like a lawyer, inquiring whether I had ever done any business for a man named Moreland. Silas overheard the conversation."

## CHAPTER XII.

### HOW A CUFF-BUTTON CAN BECOME A BREAST-PIN.

It was Thursday afternoon. Molly Humstone was about issuing from a diminutive Emporium in Front Street over whose entrance a sign announced to all that groceries and provisions were dispensed within by one J. Applegate. As she was taking her leave of her brother and sister, however, a fresh customer arrived and interrupted her farewell.

"Good-afternoon, sir," said the grocer, smiling pleasantly at the new-comer out of the folds of his big white duster, as he threw away the match with which he had begun lighting the store. "What will it be to-night, sir? A pound of crackers at ten, a loaf of bread at seven, or a bit of butter at almost any price?"

"Sir!" echoed Mrs. Humstone with a disdainful glance at the diminutive customer. "Do you call him sir, Josey! I should say Silas. Is it possible that you come here too, Silas?"

"It seems quite possible," replied Mr. Slack (for it was he), with sufficient dignity to make it quite evident that he did not relish the flippant manner of Molly's words. "From the appearance I should say it seemed highly probable."

"If you *call* it an appearance," returned Mrs. Humstone, scrutinizing Mr. Slack from head to foot.

"You seem to be acquainted with each other," observed Mrs. Applegate in her friendly voice, trying to keep things sweet.

"Why, yes," rejoined Molly, calling to mind that she must deal gently with her brother's customers, "we are. Silas works in Mr. Hardangle's office."

"I can announce my own affairs when I wish and choose," dryly declared Mr. Slack.

"Certainly," returned Molly, determined not to offend against her brother's interests. "Perhaps you didn't know that this was my brother, Silas?"

"I had not happened to be aware of it," replied Mr. Slack, betraying no sign of interest in the information. "That, I presume, accounts for your bringing your tongue here. If you will permit me, I will hint to you that Mr. Hardangle may want his dinner some time before midnight."

This cool intimation of neglect of duty on her part, from one whom she had disliked more and more, every time their common interest in Mr. Hardangle had thrown them together, was more than Molly's punctual pride could endure. She quite forgot her brother's well-being.

"You outrageous little rat!" she cried. "To think of your presuming to remind me of my duty in your mean little squeak! To think of it! As if I was ever half-a-minute behind-hand! Humph! if it wasn't that you're such an insignificant little youngster, I'd souse your head in that pickle-brine. You!"

Mr. Slack in reply only smiled triumphantly at the easy revenge he had obtained. Molly found time to recollect herself and said a hasty good-bye.

Mr. Applegate speedily filled the order which Mr. Slack gave, and then inquired if it were all.

"I should say that it was a great deal—a liberal provision," observed Mr. Slack grandly, by way of reply.

"Why, yes, to be sure," assented the grocer, quite humbled by his customer's stately rebuke. "A very nice provision. Butter, fourteen; ham, eighteen; bread, fourteen. Forty-six cents, sir."

"Everything is so high!" moaned Mr. Slack, fumbling in his pockets. "It takes quite a fortune for every meal, especially if one never cramps nor stints those dependent on him. There are forty—is that all I've got? Oh, no, here is yet a nickel. I fear I'm one cent short. I don't get

paid by my respected employer till the first of the month, and I'm run clean dry. Yes, forty-five are all I've got."

"Oh, never mind," rejoined the grocer, "never mind about the penny : any other time will do."

"I'm sure I'm very much obliged to you for your goodness," rejoined Mr. Slack. "And," he continued to himself when he had reached the street, "your goodness is none the less goodness because I have and hold five dollars in my coat-pocket. But I was perfectly honest in saying that I had no more, because Mag's five is extra—not my daily wages, upon which I am expected to have my being. Salary is one thing and extras are a thing by themselves."

When Josey Applegate blew out the lights in his place of business, and sought his wife in her clean little home over the store, it was with a smile of unusual breadth and meaning upon his jolly face that he sat down beside her on the black horsehair sofa, and took one of her hands in his.

"Did you think I'd forgot?" he inquired, widening both the smile and its meaning, "did you think I'd forgot about this being our wedding-day?"

"Deary me!" exclaimed Dolly quite aghast. "It was me forgot, Josey—I truly did!"

"Well, there now!" cried Josey. "I was fooled. Here I've been thinking I saw reproaches in your face all day, and that you were waiting to see if I'd forgot it. And I supposed you and Molly had had it all over upstairs, by yourselves. Well, well, well! So it was you that forgot to be minded of it."

"I don't know how it was, I'm sure," rejoined Dolly rather ruefully. "I never forgot it before. But, Josey," giving the rough hand in her lap a loving squeeze, "it ain't as if I'd forgot what the wedding brought me."

"Oh, you old girl!" cried Josey, quite affected by this affectionate speech. "You ain't forgot me, hey? Well, I reckon not! It's gone thirty years to-night, since we was hitched together, and we hain't neither of us balked

since. We've pulled willing and strong, and you never yet said the load was too heavy."

"I guess it's because you've took a deal of my share of the pulling," murmured Dolly slowly.

"And I guess its because, being well-matched, we didn't either of us know much about the load. But if anybody's done more than his share, it's *her* share. You've hauled steady of times when I was feeling a little restless and skittish, and kept me right to my place in the traces. Oh, you've been the making of me, and I ain't ashamed to say it!"

"I'm thinking that one has done about as much making as the other," replied Dolly, "and if I have made anything, and it's stood, it's because I had a good natural foundation to build on."

"Oh, you old girl!" cried Josey, "don't you go a-spoiling me with soft words, this late day. But look here, Dolly: here's a little rememberer from your mate."

Saying this, Josey, his face bearing joyful evidence of the blessedness of giving, produced from his vest-pocket a gold breast-pin bearing upon its face the design of a tiny, jeweled serpent coiled into the shape of a capital. letter.

"Why, Josey! How could you! It's just a perfect beauty! How could you afford it? But this letter—this W—what does it mean, Josey?"

"Why, can't you guess?" rejoined Josey, evidently in the huge enjoyment of some secret jest. W? Why wedding of course."

"Now, Josey, you're making game of me," protested Dolly, beginning to suspect her husband of some harmless guile.

"Game of you!" cried Josey, quite beside himself with malevolent delight. "Moreover, if you turn it around, it would make a sort of an M. And don't that prove it? W for wedding, and M for marriage."

Dolly gave a puzzled laugh.

"Well, well, old girl, not to keep you in the dark any

longer," said Josey, "that W was on the thing when I found it. For I did find it and on the day I sold poor old Doll. Not that it was a pin then: it was a gentleman's sleeve-button, and I had it changed for you. I was going through all the cab to make sure I wasn't leaving a little fortune to another man, and there, not on the floor but hid under the cloth in the crack where the front meets the floor, I found that ornament. I suppose it was kicked in there by somebody. And now you see it all, and how I agreed with myself to have it made into a pin for your wedding-present."

Mrs. Applegate half laughed and half cried, and a very pleasant evening's talk ensued about old days and old sorrows. When bedtime came, Dolly remarked, with a full-grown tear upon her cheek:

"I reckon if anything has stood, it was because I had a good natural foundation to build upon."

And Josey, not wishing to be outdone, replied:

"No poor house won't stand on the best foundation, unless it's well made."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### MR. SLACK'S SUSPICIONS.

ROBERT MORELAND, favored, prosperous, flattered Robert Moreland, was the father of the child of poor, unknown, pitiable Rachel Underwood! Silas Slack's visit to his sister had confirmed the suspicion which his position at the key-hole of the lawyer's office had aroused. The secret knowledge filled his mean nature with malevolent delight, even though his sister's threat stood in the way of his realizing any present benefit from it. But what, Mr. Slack asked himself, ought he to think of Mr. Hardangle? Was Rachel Underwood's charge against him all the fabrication of a deranged intellect? And why had he sought Madame Guillon concerning Robert Moreland? That was a low and underhanded piece of business.

"I really cannot suspect him," said Mr. Slack to himself, "and yet there's no telling. At all events, there are some dark doings here which it shall be my endeavor to ferret out. And my first step must be to discover the whereabouts of Rachel Underwood, as it seems she does not intend to return."

It was, however, to no purpose that Mr. Slack consumed many of the hours which he could call his own in prowling about forlorn tenements not fit to be the homes of well-bred dogs, and in studying the endless variety of countenances exhibited to him on the streets, and in the parks. He failed to obtain the information he desired.

After a month's futile expenditure of both time and strength, his zeal had so far cooled that he resolved to make but one more attempt. Christmas-day being a recognized holiday in the office of Jeremiah Hardangle, Mr. Slack naturally hit upon that day. Accordingly a

bright and early hour of that sacred festival found him at breakfast with his family.

"Children," he was saying, looking magnificently over the morning board, with eyes which seemed to behold all manner of good things suitable to the character of the day spread forth upon it, "which of you can tell me by what name this day is popularly known?"

Mr. Slack's offspring were not blessed with such remarkably keen organs of vision as their father, and being compelled to see things as they actually were, they did not give evidence of being possessed with that spirit of holiday gayety which should have led them to respond immediately and with zest to his inquiry. In plain truth, they evidently had no intention of replying at all. Their progenitor, therefore, interrogated his eldest son by name.

"Mike," he said, "you heard my question. What is the popular name of this day?"

Thus singled out, that urchin mumbled forth:

"Christmas, I s'ppose."

"Far better say you know than you suppose," commented the husband and father. "Yes, Christmas. And you, Milly, tell me what two words people address to one another upon this memorable day?"

"Merry Christmas," returned Milly, looking sourly into her father's face. "But why they call it that, I don't know, I'm sure. It's stupid enough here, Heaven knows!"

"Milly," observed Mr. Slack severely, "your reply is rather more extended than my question demanded. It is bad enough for certain of the young to be seen, to say nothing of their being heard. Now, Milly, to rebuke you for what you have said, I inform you without further delay, that this salted pork was procured especially for you."

"You know I don't like the horrid old stuff!" interrupted the young lady, seemingly little crushed by her rebuke.

"Milly, Milly," pursued Mr. Slack, "remember what I said about the mere sight of some young persons. I wish

to ask you, in view of this holiday remembrance which I have denied myself to make, how do you think your late manifestation of discontent appears?"

"It looks a heap better than a great hunk of slimy, greasy, salt pork!" retorted Milly.

"Looks are very deceptive," observed Mr. Silas Slack, rather hard-put for a suitable reply. "And now," he continued, "before I go I have one more question to ask you, Milly. Why are you proud of your pa?"

"Because he makes presents and then eats them up himself!" returned that young lady unexpectedly.

"That will do, Milly," remarked Mr. Slack, quite unmoved. "You have done yourself and me anything but credit this morning. Paulina, good-bye."

Mr. Slack appeared satisfied, and soon after went out. A bright, bracing morning crowned Mr. Slack's final effort to trace out the whereabouts of Rachel Underwood. But his labors did not lie in the most agreeable quarters. He patrolled the river-front from the battery to Fourteenth Street until he was sick of the smell of salt water; he hung about crowded corners until the police not very politely recommended him to move on; he shoved his way into throngs of holiday children until Christmas horns and drums well-nigh distracted him; he poked his nose into places where his nose had no right to be, and had it poked rather roughly back again; he worked a passage into many a dark rat-hole where dirty human vermin gnawed and fought their lives away; he peered into narrow passages, he peered around angles, he peered into dives below ground, and dens above ground; he peered high and he peered low, he peered east, and he peered west—and he peered in vain! "The Streets, New York," was not an easy number to find: Mr. Slack found it impossible to find.

The sinking sun of this brief winter afternoon, cast its shadows into Cherry Street as Mr. Slack, with the look of a hunter who is bringing home no birds, was slowly winding his peering way down its melancholy slope. Melancholy?

Yes, melancholy and, in spite of the plenteous youngsters, lonely enough. For the chilling wind that swept bleakly over its sloping roofs and beat sighingly at old dormer windows, whispered mournfully of bright and happy days forever gone; whispered drearily of joyous Christmases in the old days, when the hospitable Knickerbocker grandsire gathered his relations of three generations about loaded tables and glowing firesides, little thinking that the moan of Poverty would one day drown out the rollicking laugh of his grandchildren at their blind-man's-buff, or that his cheerful halls should yet echo the mad curse of the bloated sot, or that his doorstep should be worn by the passing and repassing of the feet of crime and shame; whispered dreamily of summer-days on the green river-bank where merry children gambolled with their pets, and soberer parents peacefully enjoyed the quiet and beauty of their rich heritage; whispered wildly, whispered dolefully, of change and decay.

But Mr. Slack had no time or inclination for joining the winter wind in this sort of reverie, as he crept along on his homeward way, peering into the windows that he passed. At one of these windows a young man peered back at him. The large dark eyes of this individual, and the face in which they were set, affected Mr. Slack with a deep curiosity. He continued to gaze into them for the space of five or ten seconds, and then straightway passed to the door by which entrance was gained to the room where the young man sat. The door was opened by the proprietor of the apartment, bearing a mischievous young monkey upon his shoulder.

"I beg pardon," began Mr. Slack, "if I intrude. Your face, your turn of eye and countenance, so strongly attracted me that I could not resist coming in."

The young man making no reply, Mr. Slack, as if from force of habit, peered inquisitively all about the room, and then continued:

"Begging and craving again, I must say (honesty compels me) that it was not in one sense *your* face that drew

me. It was rather its resemblance to the countenance of another, to—to—well, a client of mine. You see I am a lawyer, sir."

"Beggin' nuthin'," returned the young man, "you see that I'm a monkey-trainer. And cravin' nuthin', I remark to you that Bumpo is so particular well-trained that when chumps bothers me too long with their gab, he flies at them and tears out several of their hairs."

Mr. Slack assured his host that he would detain him but a moment longer.

"But," he continued, "there is one question which I beg leave and permission to ask. I will give you this nickel for the required information. Are you the brother of a sister?"

"My eye!" exclaimed the monkey-owner, depositing the nickel which Bumpo dutifully handed him, in his vest-pocket. "Sister again! Holy smoke! I'm glad that Bump ain't got his neck-wear on, or I suppose I'd have to be asked again where I got that from."

Bumpo's neckwear, Mr. Slack. A trinket, a bawble, Mr. Slack. A tiny jewelled serpent, that once seemed to be stinging in your pocket, Mr. Silas Slack.

"Who asked you about your sister before?" quickly inquired Mr. Slack, inwardly repeating: "Hardangle, Esquire, ladies and gents."

"How many more questions to make one?" asked the young man. "Never mind who asked me. It's none of your blame biz! Yes, I had a chippie once, which is to say a sis. Now, hump! I've seed you before, young chap, though you don't guess where and won't ever know, but I don't want to see you again. Hump, I say!"

But Mr. Slack would have lost a good many hairs rather than obey. He felt that his aim was so good his game was sure. Success seemed within his grasp. He offered the monkey another nickel.

"Let me beg and crave another moment," he said. "The man who called here to ask about your sister looked like a lawyer, didn't he?"

"He did, did he? Well, he just didn't. No *man* ever called here to ask about no sister. You don't count."

"Oh, it was a woman, was it? Was she rather short and dark?"

"No, she wasn't rather nuthin'. No woman ever called here—except you. The she what asked me was tall enough to make two of such a little runt as you. Come, Bump, we must clear him out!"

"A moment, one moment of time!" cried Mr. Slack, putting his foot on the doorsill. "Your sister—her name is Underwood?"

"Underwood, is it? Then she's spliced since I seed her—which was years ago—because my name's Otway—William Otway. Come, monk, we must clear him out!"

At this, Bumpo crouched himself for a spring, and Mr. Slack withdrew towards the hall-door.

"One second, one second of time!" he cried. "Another nickel if you'll tell me where she lives!"

"Give us the nickel, then," returned the young man, and when the money was safely in his hand, he smiled an evil smile of triumph, as he continued: "I ain't been home in years. I don't even know where that place lies. Least of all I don't know where's her home. And so I says: Bumpo, at him!"

As the little brown beast made a flying leap at his "several hairs," Mr. Slack jumped to the sidewalk, and beat a hasty retreat.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### VICTIM OR VICTOR.

It was Christmas Eve. Robert Moreland and his little son were returning from his wife's home, whither they had gone to bear the season's greetings. The winter wind was hoarsely howling through streets and over chimney-tops, and driving the snow pell-mell into drifts along the house-fronts, or dashing it indiscriminately into the faces of all Christmas wayfarers, and little Rex, prattling busily away, had walked but two or three blocks when his father was forced to take him in his arms. He had little more than done so, when, under the street-lamp at the next crossing, a woman accosted him.

"Merry Christmas, Robert!" she said.

Robert Moreland could not have started more suddenly had a spirit from some other world floated down on the wings of the storm and laid its unearthly hand upon him.

"Rachel, Rachel Underwood!" he cried. "How came you here? The child has ears. I wish you a very happy Christmas."

"Robert, Robert Moreland!" replied the woman. "He has ears and a tongue. Master Rex, look down from your warm nest and see what a nice mother you should have had."

"Rachel!" hoarsely pleaded Robert, "for God's sake forbear!"

"Forbear?—what a fine word! Robert, do you think I'm handsome yet? You used to say I was. My shoes are a trifle worn for the snow, and my dress is a little ragged; and then I've been through a good deal since I last saw you. But, really, don't you think my eyes are bright and handsome still?"

Without answering the woman's question, Robert Moreland put his child down in the snow and bade him wait for him at the other side of the crossing. Then, turning his eyes full into those of Rachel Underwood, he exclaimed in a low voice :

"Rachel, Rachel, Rachel!"

"Never mind about Rachel, Rachel, Rachel," broke in the young woman, "but answer my question. Do you think they are handsome?"

"Do not ask such a question, Rachel. And we must not stand here. What can I do for you?"

"What can you do for me? Oh, dear me, how funny! I'm not dressed very well, am I, Robert?"

"No, Rachel. But I really must go. Here are five dollars to get you something warmer to wear."

"So funny again! Do you know what I'm thinking about?"

"No, Rachel. Take the money."

"I'm wondering why you don't ask me where your oldest child is. Why, you don't even know whether it's a son or a daughter."

"Come, come, Rachel!" cried Robert, unable to conceal the horrid agitation which was quivering within him, "here are five dollars more. I must go. Mrs. Moreland will be awaiting me."

"Mrs. Moreland! Oh my, oh my! So strange again! Such odd things you do say! You always were good company. You don't seem to know at all that Mrs. Moreland is talking to you. And really, my dress isn't just as warm as it ought to be for a woman of my station : the wind will leak through, you know, Robert."

"Yes, yes, Rachel; that's just the reason I offer you the money. Why do you not take it? There, I put it in your shawl. Good-night."

But as Robert started to go, Rachel suddenly shot out a long, thin hand, and seized him by the arm.

"Now don't be so quick," she said, darting the money into the pocket of his great-coat. "I haven't said all yet.

Now, really, don't hurry so: I'm going to ask you one more question. What if I should follow you?"

Robert Moreland's face, which had been white before, was now overspread with a deathly pallor.

"What do you mean, woman?"

"Now that's another funny one! Isn't it queer that you don't know what such an easy question means! But I'll ask it again: What if I should go home with you and sit in your parlor and talk to your wife (other wife I mean —you've got two, you know)? Now what?"

"Look here, Rachel," said Robert desperately, "I must go! But I'll tell you: let me come and see you to-morrow night, and we'll settle things."

"Now that's an idea! I'll do it, Robert. But I don't live in a very nice house. It's a big one, though: there's no end of rooms in it. But the sun never shines into them, and it smells bad. But you come; and, since you don't know the way and ain't much used to such places, I'll meet you at the City Hall, and we'll go together. Nobody will bother you while I'm with you: they know Rachel. The City Hall at half-past eight. Good-night."

Gathering her scanty shawl about her, Rachel Underwood, without another word, darted down the cross-street in the direction of the East River. Robert Moreland, when he realized that she had gone, hurried to his little boy, and brushing the snow from his cloak and cap, caught him eagerly in his arms. Not so easily, however, could he take back to himself his peace of mind. The shades of darkness which time had illumined had revealed to him once more the shadowy outline of their sable curtains.

"Are your feet cold, Rex?"

"No, papa. I climbed on the lamp-post."

"Isn't this snow just jolly, though? Old Santa will have no trouble with his sled and reindeers to-night, will he?"

"No, papa, he'll just come jingle, jingle. Papa, who was that pretty lady, all in rags? She was pretty, but I didn't like her: she seemed to frighten you so."

"Oh, she's a woman I used to know, Rex. It's enough to frighten any one—she looked so pale and cold and wild. Yes, indeed, he will come jingle, jingle."

"And he's going to bring me a drum and a hum-top and a tin horn: I asked him to. Does that lady live in New York?"

"Yes, Rex, I think she does. How do you know old Santa heard you?"

"Why, I just know it, papa. And I'll go drum, drum, drum, all around the house. Papa, what did that ragged lady say she ought to have been my mamma for?"

"Oh, she may have thought how nice it would be to have a little boy like you and live in a nice house, instead of being all ragged and cold. Now be quiet a minute, Rex, I want to think."

The little boy obeyed, and the father was the first to break the silence. Whatever may have been the thoughts that had been passing through his mind, he merely said:

"Rex, there are a great many such women in New York. Poor things! Did you see me offer her money?"

"Yes, papa, and she wouldn't take it."

"No, she gave it back to me. I wish she would have taken it: she was so poorly dressed. Your Uncle Phil works all day among just such people, Rex; and a noble work it is—very noble."

"Do you mean you are going to tell Uncle Phil about this one, too, papa? Maybe she'd take it from him. I'm sure she must have been cold."

"I don't know as Uncle Phil could find her if I did, and she seemed quite proud, too. I'm sorry you saw her, Rex. Such sights are better for older eyes, and I sent you across the street because I didn't want you to hear the unpleasant things she might say."

"Why, papa, here are the steps, and you were going right by them. And there's mamma in the window looking for us."

"Well, I'm getting to be quite a philosopher, to forget what I'm about, am I not?" said Robert, turning back.

And then he mentally added: "Ah, Florence, Florence, if anything *should* happen!"

"Well," said Florence Moreland, as her little family were seated at dinner that night, "who would have believed that Christmas had come again!"

"Who? Why, I should," responded Robert. "I tell you what, Florence, getting married is a bad business in one way. The time passes so rapidly that one's life is in danger of being spent before he knows it."

"You poor fellow!" rejoined Florence. "I wish I could let you out of your difficulty. But to tell the honest truth, you don't look a day older than you did when we were married—and, dear me, we're getting to be quite a staid old couple by this time."

"I'm sure it seems long enough to me since we had a Christmas before," put in Rex. "I think it takes a awful time to come."

"Do you, love?" said the fond mother. "Well, it used to seem so to me once, too; but now one flies along so quickly after another, that they quite take my breath away. This snow just tickles you to death, doesn't it?"

"Yes, mamma; but it isn't so jolly for everybody. Papa and I saw such a poor, ragged woman! She looked so bad that she quite frightened us, and papa had to send me across the street so that I shouldn't hear anything to make me feel sorry. She was a pretty lady, but I didn't think she was nice, and she said she ought to have been my mamma. Papa told me there were a good many women like her in the city, but she wouldn't take any money to buy better dresses."

"Quite a graphic account," said Robert Moreland, smiling into Rex's eyes. "She was a queer case, Florence. I offered her ten dollars, half-clad creature that she was, but she wouldn't have it. The poor thing seemed partially demented, and, as Rex has hinted, almost to envy you your motherhood and riches. If there were more like Phil, there would be fewer like her."

"Oh, isn't it awful that such as she can't have a Merry

Christmas, too!" cried Florence. "It seems almost selfish in us to have so many good things, while there is such distress so near at hand. Sometimes when Phil—dear, dear Phil!—is talking to me about his work (which isn't very often, he's so overtaxed), I do feel so mean and narrow and wrapped up in my own selfishness. I suppose you will give Phil your usual gift to the poor this Christmas?"

"I've a great mind to double it, Florence," replied Robert. "That sight to-night, together with your self-accusing words, has moved me so much that I believe I'll make it two hundred. Yes, I will."

"That's my Robert all over!" exclaimed the admiring wife. "And do you know, I'm going to give your old hundred myself, and that seems such a little bit. But perhaps it will bring a little happiness to some poor child of sin and sorrow, or wipe away, for a day at least, the tears from a pale, wrinkled cheek."

The subject of the "pretty lady" was destined once more to be raised that night.

Rex had been long cosily dreaming of long processions of youthful drummers and small armies of boys flourishing Christmas trumpets. The storm was driving against the library windows and a long evening of sweet communion was drawing to a close, when Florence exclaimed:

"Oh, Robert! if the city were only filled with men like you, such sad scenes as you and Rex witnessed to-night would be the rarity instead of an every-day occurrence. It is just as Phil says, the city will only be saved when all good men become missionaries and are willing to give their share either in time or money to the work of uplifting and purifying and renovating the poor wrecks of men, women, and children who are ground down by poverty and enslaved by appetite. It's an easy thing to blame these poor mortals for their sins and crimes, but even we, with all our comforts, at times feel the need of diversion: how then can we find fault with them if they seek for a momentary relief in drowning the remembrance of their miseries in drunkenness and shame?"

Robert Moreland did not smile at his wife's earnestness: he did not say that her heart was overbalancing her head. No, Robert was possessed, on his best side, of a noble and refined nature, a nature readily touched by exalted sentiments; one which, while it had not proved strong enough to rule him, was yet strong enough, when aroused, vehemently to loathe and condemn those feet of clay which led him into woful divergence from the straight path of rectitude. His wife's words found a quick and hearty response in his breast. The thought of bringing happiness where there had been misery, and light where darkness had long held uninterrupted sway, was at once grateful and beautiful, and he felt its power. Robert Moreland was one of that not inconsiderable class of men who recoil from the sight of suffering in all its forms. Cruelty, even in its more refined manifestations, awoke no other sensation within him than avenging disgust. Could he have had his way, the whole world would have been rich and happy. More than that, he was willing to do his part towards bringing about such a result. He would gladly have denied himself if thereby he could have relieved distress in another. What, then, was the radical weakness in a character every one loved for its buoyancy and generosity? How came it that Robert had wrought the ruin and desolation of the pitiful young creature who had spoken his name in the flare of the gas that very night? How was it compatible with such a nature that he who would resolutely have interposed his broad shoulders between any woman and her deceiver, had himself brought to a pretty and innocent girl as bitter grief as a woman's heart can know, and rudely trampled upon that sweetest and tenderest thing in God's universe—a woman's love? Ah, here lay the explanation: Robert's goodness, like another man's badness, was but natural. He hated vulgarity and cruelty as spontaneously as another man revelled in them. It was not that vulgarity and cruelty were unworthy and degrading, but that they produced unpleasantness and pain. Alms and charity cost him no more effort than did malice and rapacity in another.

Robert Moreland deprecated not the offence but the penalty : not the sowing but the reaping. Thus it was that, lured on, step by step, he had selfishly committed an offence whose far-reaching prospect of misery and shame was too shadowy to confront him with its vision of cruelty. No, Robert felt not the slightest inclination to smile at his wife's earnest words. For not only did they receive his heart's full approval, but they also awakened echoes and images which drove far from him any thought of mirth. "If the city were filled with men like you." Ah, the irony of it ! Ah, the bitterness of it ! Not the bitterness of the transgression, but the bitterness of the law. Not the bitterness of baseness, but the bitterness of unworthiness !

"Florence," he burst forth, "you talk like the angel you are ! You make me feel mean and low beside you. Speak to me as much as you will about your love and sympathy for your fallen brothers and sisters, but do not, do not praise me, nor wish that there existed a single other man like me. To hear you, who are all that is good and noble, praising me who am so unworthy, is almost more than I can endure. You must not do it, you must not !"

Thus again did Robert Moreland stultify himself, thus again did he show himself strong enough to utter half the truth, too weak to be silent. Thus again, by being almost a man was he the more no man. Making a palsied attempt to be sincere in self-denunciation, he but raised himself, as he secretly knew, still higher in his wife's esteem. Her reply was what might be expected.

"Robert," she said, "I once asked you never to talk to me like that. Please do not do it again. It pains me, and all to no purpose. Your very denial of goodness only reveals your possession of it. Hark, love ! The old clock on the stairs is ushering in our sixth Christmas. Dear old clock ! each time you tell me that another Christmas has come, you find me a little more happy and full of love. Oh, my husband, I wish you such a merry, merry Christmas !"

"Ten, eleven, twelve!" A year of love and joy has gone, old clock on the stairs, Robert Moreland, in your library: what sort of a year has begun, Robert Moreland, in your library, old clock on the stairs, Rachel Underwood —wherever you are?

## CHAPTER XV.

### DEBTOR AND CREDITOR.

MERRY CHRISTMAS was a mockery for Jeremiah Hardangle, as he sat down to the turkey and mince-pie which Molly had carefully prepared, for the lawyer's heart was too deep and cold for merriment, and his thoughts were too busy with memories of the past. Merry Christmas was not a mockery to Molly Humstone, for that morning the man of law had bestowed upon her no less substantial a gift than his last will and testament conveying to her all properties of which he should die possessed. Nor was it a mockery to good Josey Applegate and his benignant spouse, to whom Molly hastened to make known the wonderful news, after the dishes were washed and put away that afternoon. In the course of this visit the following conversation took place:

"Well, sister, you see I'm wearing it," said Dolly.

"Wearing what?"

Mrs. Applegate laid her finger upon the breast-pin at her neck, which hitherto she had reserved for state occasions.

"Oh," continued Molly, "you mean that pin Josey gave you, and which was so exactly like the one that scaring little monkey had. I've always said I hated to see it on you, and I do now. I vow it was stolen from somebody, and it's like burglaring to wear it."

"Well, well," broke in Josey, "what's a pin for if not to wear? It is queer that there should have been another like it, but being it's my gift I want the old girl to wear it right along."

In the family of Mr. Slack, Merry Christmas was the same old mockery it always was, with the exception that Milly had married and exchanged the box-like home of

her father for a box-like home of her own, and that Mike had grown weary of living with an honest man and surreptitiously taken his departure.

It was eight o'clock in the evening of this Christmas day, for the home of Robert Moreland, where Merry Christmas has been a reality to all save the master of the house himself. Now, as he rose to take leave of his wife and little boy, the bitterness of his soul reached its climax.

"Must you really go?" asked his wife, pleadingly.

"Yes, I must go," replied Robert, looking into her rueful face. "And it's not a very nice matter either, especially for Christmas night, when of all nights I dislike leaving you. I'd rather not tell you just what it is, dear, though I will if you ask me."

Did Florence Moreland, laying bare in a moment the thin, yet cunning stratagem of these words, shrink away from the man who had uttered them? Did she point at him the finger of scorn and cry: "Hypocrite!" No idea was further from her mind.

"If you think it is better I should not know," she replied, "of course I shall not seek to. It does seem too bad that business must crowd itself into the few days we have together. How long shall you be gone?"

"I cannot be certain. I hope not more than an hour or thereabouts, for I know how sensitive my father's death has made you about my being out at night. But I cannot tell. If we should get into a discussion I might be forced to stay half the night. So do not sit up for me, and above all things do not worry even if I fail to put in an appearance until daybreak. Promise me that you will not worry."

"I cannot promise, Robert, because what you ask is a thing quite beyond my control. But I can promise to try, and I will."

"Good-night, papa,'" cried Rex from the floor where he was busily engaged extracting music from a very corpulent, parti-colored top. "If you meet the pretty lady, try and make her take the money: she must have been very cold."

Robert Moreland bade his child good-night, and kissed his wife with a peculiar lingering tenderness whose source she little guessed, and started away with the light of her eyes burning in his heart. True to her word, he found Rachel Underwood awaiting him at the City Hall.

"I half doubted you'd come, Robert," she said, advancing out of its shadow to meet him. "But now this is nice! It reminds me of the old days when I was working for your mother, and we used to steal off together this sort of way. But come, let's hurry, so we can talk longer."

"Can't we settle everything right here," urged Robert. "I wronged you some years ago (would to God I had not! I repent of it), and I am willing and anxious to repay you as fully as I can."

Rachel Underwood stared at her companion with her fine, dark eyes wide open.

"Robert, are you afraid to go with me?" she asked. "Are you afraid you'll never get back? Are you afraid I'm leading you to your grave? If you are, you little know my wrecked heart. Settle it here? No! Come, let us hurry!"

Rachel took the lead, and Robert, very reluctantly as his wife's face rose before him, though with no fear of violence, followed close behind her. The fallen woman glided unhesitatingly along, looking neither to the right hand nor to the left, and in a few minutes had led the way into slovenly, destitute streets, which, though he had been born in the city, Robert Moreland had never visited before. Rachel, however, made no uncertain step, she knew her dingy way all too well.

"Oh, my eye!" exclaimed a young rogue just starting out on his night's prowl, as Rachel and her follower passed him in a narrow street loud with the noise of brutal mirth, "who's she trapped to-night? A regular prize, Rach, I swear!"

"You mind your own affairs, you, Harry!" commanded Rachel, as she turned into a distorted alley still narrower than the street. "I could put you behind the bars if I wanted to, and you remember it!"

The young man made no reply except a light, scornful laugh, and Rachel passed on down the alley. She had walked but a few steps when she stumbled over a sleeping sot quite unconscious of the cold and snow.

"Here now, you, Dwyer!" she cried, stooping over and giving the poor beast a brisk shake, "you get up! If you lie there much longer you'll lie there forever, unless somebody carts you off."

And lending a helping hand to the drowsy old drunkard, she left him standing on his feet, leaning unsteadily against the high, brick wall which enclosed the alley on the south. Another half minute brought the fleet guide to a low, dark passage-way between two high tenements, into which she slipped. Then, turning and twisting through a thieves' "runway," she came to a dismantled portal into which she still led the way, and assisted her somewhat bewildered companion to mount flight after flight of winding, rickety stairs, until the fifth landing was reached. Here she opened a door and, striking a light, triumphantly ejaculated as Robert closed the door behind him:

"Home!"

Robert accepted the battered, wooden chair which his hostess offered him, and made a hasty survey of the spot. Home it may have been, but in nowise was it sweet home. Alas! it was bitter and wretched enough—more wretched than anything Robert had ever been called upon to behold. The room in which he sat was a square of about a dozen feet, two of whose walls consisted of bare boards, and two of grimy plaster. Or, more truthfully, they had been of plaster, for now great patches had fallen off, leaving the rough laths exposed—an easy ingress to the winter wind which whistled noisily outside of them, and a rapid transit to the rats and mice, which, though they were rent-free, outnumbered the crowded inhabitants of the ramshackle barrack, ten to one. The western wall was punctured by a single small window; the floor could boast no vestige of carpet; and the only furniture in sight was a low kitchen-table, two wooden-bottomed chairs, and a

diminutive cooking-stove with a very rusty pipe. A second room, which, from Robert's position, appeared about half the size of the one in which he was sitting, completed the "home." Of this contracted chamber nothing was visible except the foot of an iron bedstead and an inverted soap-box which did service for a wash-stand and supported a tin basin, a spoutless water-pitcher, a hair-comb and a bit of broken looking-glass.

Rachel allowed her guest sufficient time fully to acquaint himself with these particulars, and then said :

"It isn't so very nice, is it? It was really quite good of you to come. You don't think it's just the place for one of my eyes, do you, now? Yes, I see what you're looking about for, now that you have seen the rest. You're asking yourself where the child is. Well, she isn't here. And you needn't ask me where she is, for I don't know."

"Yes, Rachel, but let us come right at our business. As I said, I'm willing and anxious to help you to a new start in life, and to get you out of this."

"Well, now, that's funny again ! The same old fellow. You are willing ! Are you sure you're very willing, Robert? Maybe something I said last night makes you more willing than you would have been ?"

"As you will, Rachel. Still the case now stands that I do want to make what amends I can and help you out of this vile place. To settle why I am willing could help you out no faster."

"Are you very sure of that, Robert? Perhaps it might help me out a little better any way. But don't talk as if you begrudged me every minute you stayed. And, really, you hardly can go till I'm ready to have you : it's sort of thick around here, and you might not like to ask an officer to show you the way, even if you could find one. Shall I tell you something, Robert? I was going to ask you to come here before you spoke of it yourself. That's just why I was waiting for you last night. I saw you go out —I've seen you do a good many things of late. I wonder if you'll think it's funny, but I was a little afraid to have

you come here, because I knew I was going to say some real strange things that you might not like, and you're pretty big, you know. Yes, I was afraid, so I just had a friend of mine stay by me. Shadow, you're there, ain't you?"

"Yes, I'm here!" growled a deep, gruff voice out of the dark of the bedroom, and straightway a pair of rough, dirty boots became visible at the foot of the bed.

Shadow! Robert Moreland started at the sound of that name. The man who had last seen his father on the night of his murder. How strange it was that this man who was so associated with his father's death, should be a friend of Rachel Underwood.

"You see he's there, don't you, Robert?" continued Rachel. "At least, I see you do, so don't get angry at me. You needn't look at the door as if you were afraid. Can't you believe I wouldn't have you harmed for the world? Just be easy: I brought him here for myself, not for you. And now let me see: you said you were very willing."

"I said more than that, Rachel: I said I was anxious. But would it not be better that your friend should not hear our talk?"

"Oh, never fear about him. He won't bother himself about listening to what he thinks is small love-talk. He'll be asleep before you can say Jack Robinson. Of course you don't know anything about such things, Robert, but that Shadow is a very bad one, I believe. So you're more than willing. I'm glad you are, because really you must be willing, you know. All I've got to do is just to follow you home when you go—if you do go—and have some little words with her."

"Well, well, Rachel, we won't talk about that. This place isn't fit for any human being, and I'll help you out without any such trouble. We won't talk about that."

"Oh, yes, Robert, we will talk about that. That's just what we're going to talk about. You see, I want to talk about it, and you really have to do what I want you to."

"No, Rachel, no, no! Let the past be past. We must bury it as deep as the grave and cover it as high as heaven. For your sake, for my sake, it must never be disinterred. Let us leave it, a blackened and decaying corpse, and think of it only to repent of it and deplore it. And so, Rachel, looking right at the present, I say that you must not live a day longer like this. I cannot bear to think of your staying in so vile a spot and in the midst of such wicked and debasing surroundings. You must get another position in some good family, and be again as you were before."

"Before what, Robert?"

"Before, before——"

"Before before, Robert? That's a funny thing to be before. But never mind. So I must get another position in some good family. It might gall me after my free life —but it's quite an idea, after all. What would you say to giving me one in your own family?"

"I have plenty of servants, now, Rachel."

"Why, yes, of course you have. But I'll wait until you haven't enough. Servants don't stay in one place forever."

"Oh, Rachel, woman, why insist so? You know it would not be best for either of us."

"Not best? That's queer again. Perhaps, then, you would just as lief recommend me to some of your friends, as an honest girl of good, respectable character."

"Why, Rachel, why, yes, I do think you're honest, or you were when I last knew you. But, but——"

"But not respectable, you know. Yes, I see all the 'buts.' I used to be respectable, didn't I, Robert—just as respectable as honest? Your mother wouldn't have had anything but respectable people to work for her. Now, it's funny that it don't occur to you that the same reason that makes me 'but, but,' makes you so, too. But you've passed on and up as if nothing had happened, and I've passed on and down as if everything had happened."

Besides the unceasing stir of life in the great tenement, Shadow's heavy breathing (for he had now fallen asleep)

and the scamper of rats behind the dilapidated walls, were the only sounds which, for a time, broke the silence which followed Rachel's remarks. When Robert Moreland lifted his eyes to the sin-marred face before him, their look of apprehension had become mingled with grief and sadness.

"Ah, Rachel, Rachel!" he cried, "it does apply to me, it does! It applies to me more than to you. It was my fault, all my fault. But we must not dwell on it now. Dwelling on it can do no good. The only thing to do is to mend the broken past as well as we can: we cannot, alas! change it. And so, Rachel, let us look only at the present: we do not get on at all at this rate. I will give you a large sum to dress you in good clothes, and get you a better, sweeter home, and keep you until you can find good, honest employment. It would be better, far better for you to work than to have abundance, or I would make you independent the rest of your life. Now what sum would you require?"

"Don't you think we're getting on, Robert? I do: I'm getting just where I wanted to go. I'm showing you all you've done to me, so you can see just how much you're in my debt. And now, having shown you, I'm going to say that I don't like her. She's pretty—I've seen her more than once. Her eyes are as handsome as mine, and she's robbed me of you with them. Now you mustn't be very angry—it won't do here, you know—but I hate her! I hate her for her face: I hate her for her boy. But most of all, I hate her for her eyes. Are my eyes handsome yet, Robert?"

"They are as they were made, Rachel, but——"

"Always but, but! But if they are as they were made I know you think they're handsome, for you used to say it so often. I look at them in the glass, nowadays, and wonder whether they've faded—I've been so wild and bad since, Robert."

"Oh, Rachel, don't talk so, do not! You must not. You must look ahead and not backward. You must try

with all your might to leave the past and start anew. Let us try to come to some agreement by which I can make you happy again."

"Happy, Robert? Now you've just hit it! You want to make me happy. That's exactly what I want. And so I'm just going to ask you what I brought you here to ask you—to come back to me and be mine again. For you were mine, you know, and you're mine, by right, now. Rachel first: her second. I'm glad you want to make me happy, Robert."

"Rachel!"

"Why, what a voice, Robert—what a look and what a voice! You wanted to come to some agreement by which you could make me happy, and just as soon as I try to suit you, you get pale and flurried. Now you shouldn't do so. I'm not bad, as I have been, Robert—I'm tired of being bad—but I'm all hollow and wrecked, and I want some one to love me and think I'm not all wicked."

"Rachel, oh, Rachel! You're on the wrong path. You must not, must not think of me! Poor, poor thing! If you want to get where people won't think you're incapable of good, and where you can get a fresh start, I'll tell you just the thing. Take all the money you will need, and go settle down with some good farmer and his wife in the country. There no one will know the past, and, being now determined to be bad no more, you will be trusted and happy."

"Country!" echoed Rachel. "Country! What are you saying, Robert! Why, I'd rather die outright than leave New York—unless you go with me. New York's my God. I love its rush and its people and its excitement. Oh, no, Robert. Don't talk such stuff. You belong to me, you chose me first, now come back to me. Let us live together in some nice big house, if not here then in some other big city, and have horses and carriages, and be handsome and happy."

"Rachel, you are talking without thinking: you don't

realize what you are saying. Why, such a thing is impossible—it is altogether out of the question!"

"No, Robert, I'm not talking without thinking. I've been thinking about this very thing for quite a long time. And, Robert, if you will make me say it, I really *must* be happy!"

"Woman, woman, you forget! I have a wife. The thing cannot be dreamed of?"

"Wife again, Robert? Don't you know better than to talk to your first about your second? Why, it's bad enough taste to talk to a second about a first, let alone that."

"Rachel Underwood," said Robert, with an enforced return to calmness, "I have offered you what you will to make amends for my awful crime against you. I did not fully realize its terrible character at the time, but I realize it now all too vividly. I would I could undo the past: there is nothing I would not sacrifice to bring about such a result. But I cannot: God himself cannot do that. But, Rachel," and the face of Florence Moreland, though dim and confused and very far away, grew, for a brief moment brighter before the speaker's eye, "but, Rachel, I tell you, once and for all, that I cannot accede to your—I must say it—to your wrong demand."

Robert's unexpected and dignified resoluteness of manner, for a moment, disconcerted the fallen creature, but she soon recovered herself, and cried:

"Wrong! Wrong to belong to your first! Oh, I hate her! She's strengthening you, and trying to take you from me this moment! I saw the thought of her beauty pass over your face. But there—I don't want to be sharp, Robert. I want you to come willingly, as you say, so let's make the bargain pleasantly."

"Rachel, I have spoken."

"Now, Robert, you *will* make me angry and sharp, if you talk so cold and grand. And if you won't come willingly, you must come in some other way and learn to be willing afterward. For I will have you, and she sha'n't have you! She's robbed me long enough. You've

made me what I am: I am your creditor for any amount, and now I'm presenting my bill. So don't be so high and cold, but let's strike the bargain here and now."

"Rachel, I have spoken."

"Robert Moreland!" cried Rachel "have a care! Have you forgotten my threat? Is her face a charm? Will it keep me away? But stay: ain't you going home soon, now?"

"Unless you accept my offers."

"Well, I don't accept them, and I never will. So come: I'll just put on my shawl and we'll go together. Do you think she'll be up yet?"

Robert Moreland did not stir from his chair. Rachel had seen aright. The image of the sweet face which had parted so wistfully from him at the door as he was leaving home, had for a moment given him strength and inspiration in an engagement so extraordinary and terrific, that his forces had been sadly demoralized in it. But now, with Rachel standing ready to accompany him and denounce him, that same trustful face became the enemy's valiant reserves, fresh and eager. His heart died within him: his courage was blasted: he had no power to rise, nor will to think. Rachel gazed upon him, as he sat thus, with a look of triumph in her dark eye.

"Why, what makes you look so pale, Robert?" she asked. "Let's go, you know. Don't you like the idea of being seen on the rich avenues with me? Or is it—but that really can't be, you're so determined—is it that you would not like to stand by while I talk to your second? It wouldn't be very nice, would it? But, really, we might as well go right away."

"Rachel!" groaned Robert, "not to-night! I must have time to think!"

"All right, Robert, all right: just as you wish. I won't be too hard on you—I really don't want to see you suffer. Come, I'll lead the way back. But don't forget that I really must have you: you can't decide but one way, after all."

"Hasten, Rachel, hasten!" gasped Robert. "I must get out of this into the air: it's stifling here. There's the door, take the lead. This old well of a stair-case bewilders me—and this smell!"

Without another word Rachel Underwood guided her stunned victim down the dark stairs, through the dark "runway," along the dark alley, and traversing the same course by which they had come, brought him again to the City Hall.

"Now, Robert," she asked, "when shall I see you again?"

"Soon, soon, woman!"

"All right, Robert. Then I'll tell you: I'll be here every night for a week at half-past eight. Good-night."

And turning away, Rachel Underwood darted off like an evil spirit, and was soon lost to view.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### GUESSWORK.

RACHEL UNDERWOOD'S dart soon brought her back to her miserable abode. As she entered her room, the sound of heavy breathing that met her ear told her Shadow was still asleep. She approached the foot of the bed where he lay, and cried :

"The cops ! The cops ! "

Her words had the desired effect. The sleeping man was instantly aroused and sprang up with a mumbled curse.

"Never mind, father," said Rachel coolly. "I only wanted to get you awake. Come out here and sit down : I want to talk to you."

"The devil take yer fur a scheming jade ! " growled Shadow. "I hain't a-goin' to waste my time a-gabbin' with no poll-parrot."

But in spite of his surly declaration, the desperate rogue did his daughter's bidding, and stumbling out of the bedroom, took the seat which Robert Moreland had so lately vacated.

"Now, father," proceeded Rachel, when he was seated, "you haven't seen me in a long time before, have you ? "

"No, I hain't, you Rach ; and I warn't a-hankerin' to see yer now."

"Of course you weren't. You ain't hankered to see your wife and children for some years. I doubt you know whether they're dead or alive, and I'm sure you don't care. You used to be a decent father in the early days, but you're nothing now but a useless, drinking rascal."

"Yer pert tongue 'll be hung too loose fur yer good, if

yer hain't a little careful, yer homely minx!" rejoined Shadow. "Who'd blame a man fur not a-hankerin' after livin' with such an impudent hussy? A nice, respecterble darter yer've grow'd, leavin' yer home to walk the streets fur trade! Yer wants to be careful, I say!"

"Don't think you can scare me with your threats, father. You can't. I could manage you when I was a child and I can now. If I couldn't, how did I get you here to-night? I haven't had any need of you either, as far as he was concerned; but I wanted to have a talk with you, anyhow. I know you, father!"

"What do I care if yer do, yer skittish pigeon? How the devil do yer know me? Yer don't know me, yer little she-liar. Blast it! Can't I go nowhere without some fool a-sayin' he knows me? Is the hull world turned cop, I'd like to know?"

"Is that what the police ask you, father?"

"Hain't that what I seems to insinyerate, you?"

"Why, yes, father, and that's just the smart thing for them to say. Now, what do you reckon I'm going to talk to you about?"

"Some of yer young slips, mostlike."

"No, I ain't: I'm done with them."

"Yes, it looks like it, don't it, with one a-settin' along of yer, this wery night. Yer're a perty darter, hain't yer?"

"Much you care whether I am or not. But say I am, father: there's more than one that thinks my eyes are handsome. Say I am good-looking, and say that that slip came to see me because he thought so—it can't do any harm. And who do you suppose that slip was, anyhow? I'll tell you—you might be interested to know. It was the son of Reginald Moreland."

"Of who?" cried Shadow, leaning toward his daughter with a look of threatening interest.

"Of just who I said. I said he was the son of Reginald Moreland."

"Yer did say it, did yer?"

"Why, of course I did: why not, father? But I thought you'd be interested, and, sure enough, you were. Don't you see how I've tricked you, and made you squeal on yourself? That's what I'm going to talk about. I'm going to ask you just how much you know about Reginald Moreland's murder."

"Yer crochety hair-pin, yer! I tell yer, yer tongue is hung too loose fur yer good. Yer're going to talk about that, are yer? Hang yer! I'll slit yer neck fur yer, if yer don't shet yer head from such clack! First thing yer know, yer'll be a-sayin' I croaked him myself. Oh, it's a perty one yer've grow'd!"

"Well, what if I have, father? What's that got to do with your answering my question? And don't you see how you're leaking on yourself by being so turned up over my talking about the slip's father? Come, now! can't I see you know about the thing? And anyhow, don't I know Bags wasn't in the thing and you left out?"

Shadow glared angrily at the young woman before him, but she did not quail an iota before his savage glance. She sat quietly returning his gaze—the great brute's master.

"Heaps yer know about Shadow and Bags when the cops themselves didn't twig it till I told 'em," he retorted. "Yer're too smart, ain't yer? Leakin', am I? Go and ask that there flatty what was so smart too, why I'm turned up about yer openin' yer head about that Moreland. He'll tell yer as it's because my pal got soaked white and stiff and cold all on a sudden through foolin' with him. He'll let yer know, yer hussy, that Shadow ain't lost all feelin's and sentermints. What the devil are yer doin' with that rich bum here, anyhow?"

"That's my business."

"Yer business, is it? Then see that yer always minds it. Don't be a-pryin' into other people's. I suppose as it's yer business why yer want to know about that there old Moreland as yer says war murdered."

"I suppose it is, father."

"Who told yer he war murdered?"

"That's my business, too," persevered Rachel. "It's enough that I know he was."

"I reckon as that there young chump has been blabbin' to yer," ventured the curious ruffian.

"You're free to reckon just what you please," retorted Rachel. "But come: why don't you answer my question? How much do you know about that murder? And don't tell me what I know already. Don't tell me the same yarn you made up for your drunken friends. I've heard all that. Oh, I know how to get news out of men when I want it. I know how to manage them."

"Yer little devil!" growled Shadow. "I tell yer, yer tongue is hung too loose fur yer good! Do I know more nor the perlice could find out? Yer're a perty one, hain't yer?"

"Morris Underwood," said Rachel slowly, "we'll say you don't know any more about Reginald Moreland than you say——"

"Which bein' all there is to say, is a smart thing to do," interjected Shadow.

"We'll say that's all you know," continued Rachel. "I don't feel like talking to-night after all, and you're too full of drink to be in a proper state to listen. You just cut in and sleep on my bed and I'll sit here by the fire. Cut along now: that's a good father for once."

Shadow, whose wits and curiosity and apprehensions, if he entertained any, were dulled by alcohol, was not loath to comply with this request, and slunk back cursing about his "perty darter," to the bed from which, cursing, he had sprung up. In less than three minutes he was sleeping heavily. The sound of his labored breathing had been audible in the little rooms for scarcely twice that time, when there was a light knock at the hall-door. Rachel, who was sitting thinking over the fire, called out:

"Come in!"

In answer to the summons the door slowly opened and a head was poked in at it. The head, after it had first

peered cautiously about the room, was slowly followed by an unostentatious body. Mr. Silas Slack stood revealed.

"Good-evening, Miss Underwood," he said, in his feminine voice.

"Well, good-evening," returned Rachel, "Who are you?"

"Why, don't you recollect and remember me, Miss Underwood? Don't you really call me to mind?"

"No, I don't recollect you, nor remember you, nor call you to mind. Don't stand diddling there, but speak out. Who are you, and what gives me the bother of seeing you at this time of night?"

"Before I reply," answered Mr. Slack, who, by this time had reached Shadow's vacated chair, "I'll just be seated. So you don't know me. I supposed of course you'd remember me. My name is Slack—Mr. Silas Slack."

"And who and what is Mr. Silas Slack? Come, little chap, talk out or I'll put you out. I've got too much to think about to be bothered for nothing."

"It is not for nothing, Miss Underwood. Let me assist your memory by informing you that I am daily engaged in the office of one Hardangle—commonly known as the much respected legal light, Jeremiah Hardangle, Esquire."

"And who in the world is the respected Hardangle? What can lawyers have to do with me?"

"And you don't recall Hardangle, either? Is it possible! I will still further aid your memory by informing you that you once came into his office and had some conversation with him."

"I did? I never was in a lawyer's office in my life. You've got the wrong person, this time, so you may just as well skip out of here, and leave me to my thinking."

"Really, now, Miss Underwood, excuse me, but you are the identical person who came to our office, both in name and appearance. It is most extraordinary that you don't recollect. Permit me yet again to be of assistance

to you, by mentioning that you came to our office—I being there at the time—to make inquiries concerning the will of one——"

Here Mr. Slack paused and cocked his ear attentively in the direction of the open door of the little bedroom.

"Why don't you go on?" asked Rachel.

"I have certain reasons for wishing to be very sure that your friend is asleep," explained Mr. Slack. "I should by no means wish him to overhear my remarks."

"How do you know he is my friend?" demanded Rachel.

"I do not know it," returned Mr. Slack. "I merely guessed and surmised it from his being here."

"How do you know it's a him at all?" again questioned Rachel sharply.

"A moment, a moment of time, and I will explain all," deprecated the little man. "The way in which I happen to know, is that I followed you both from the saloon where you found him and in some way prevailed upon him to accompany you. I followed you, not from any purpose of observing your actions, but solely for the purpose of learning your own dwelling-place. I had reasons, as you shall in a moment know, for desiring that knowledge for which I have long been striving. And now, before I go on to make known to you aforesaid weighty reasons, it must be understood, Miss Underwood, that what we shall say here shall be considered strictly confidential. Before you, as a notary, I do now solemnly swear that all you shall say shall be by me considered and held inviolable. Do you do the same before me?"

"Yes, I swear black and blue," retorted Rachel. "Now go on."

"I was saying that you came to our office to learn what you could, concerning the last testament of one Reginald Moreland."

"What! I!" cried Rachel. "Concerning the will of Reginald Moreland!"

"You remember now?"

"I do not remember any such thing. What do you mean?"

"Miss Underwood, this is simply astounding. You don't recollect?"

"I say I do not! Tell me again. The will of Reginald Moreland?"

"Yes, the last will and testament, revoking all former documents, of Reginald Moreland, Esq., some years since mysteriously put out of the way. Let us speak softly, Miss Underwood: your friend must not overhear. I have reasons."

"No danger of him, when he's once asleep. Don't stop to talk about him. Go on: tell me what I said. I know now why I don't remember. I can't remember anything back there for awhile—everything is a blank. I remember doing a certain act—parting with a little thing of mine—somewhere in the last part of a certain summer. Then I indistinctly remember some other things; and then I don't remember anything more that happened for a long time. But after that time I began to wake up and found that I was in a mad-house (where you should have looked if you wanted to find me). From there I begin to remember again, and after awhile I was let out and came here. Goodness gracious! was I so mad? Did I come and not know it? But hurry: tell me what I said."

"First, Miss Underwood, you will permit me to say, that I see you are cognizant of the aforesaid will——"

"Say I am, say I am!" interrupted Rachel.

"Yes, we will decide that you are. So much for that. Now for number two. Before I repeat to you what you said, my honesty compels me to make a little explanation. As you probably do not remember, entrance to Hardangle's main office must be gained through a waiting-room which is the scene of my labors. You both spoke so loudly that I could not avoid catching much of your conversation. Therefore, I am properly and honestly in possession of the information you desire. To proceed: you acted strangely, but I did not imagine that you were so

reduced as your words indicate. I now understand why you did not return to the office as I thought you might. In short—but I have said enough. You must by this time understand the whole thing. Having thus cleared the way, I may now state to you that, in a wild and incoherent way, you charged the lawyer with having, in some manner unmentioned by you, unduly influenced the mind of his client, Mr. Moreland, in the matter of his will, so that said client transferred certain items from the credit of—I hesitate, Miss Underwood. Your words may have been dictated not by fact, but by the feverish and fanciful creations of a disordered mind."

"Did I say all that—did I!" cried Rachel. "And I don't remember a word of it! I charged him with getting it out of him!"

"Such were, in effect, your words; and I gather from your present remark that they were dictated by fact."

"Yes, by fact, by fact: you needn't be so tender. He did promise me and he did mean it!"

"No doubt, Miss Underwood; but allow me to inquire what your present opinion is concerning the charge you preferred against Hardangle. Does your sober view of it stand side by side with your less responsible opinion? Let us not speak too loud."

"Why, I'm very sure he did mean it. He came to me all in a heat, and said he'd guessed the whole thing——"

"Which was?" interjected Mr. Slack.

"Well, which was that his son had spoiled me. And he declared that the child—having its birth in its way—should, at least, have money on its side. I was to get the money from him while he lived, and after that from the son. Oh, I know he meant it! But about the lawyer—why, I suppose it was nothing but a crazy idea."

"Where did you first get the idea, do you suppose?"

"I'm sure I don't know. I saw his death in a paper one day at a Frenchwoman's house where I was living. Then I remember seeing the will in another paper in a saloon, and how the lawyer had got half a million. How

angry I was that there was no mention of the child! It's one of the last things I seem to clearly recollect."

"Exactly so!" cried Mr. Slack, excitedly, his own suspicions now thoroughly aroused. "It was, therefore, very natural that it should be in your mind when your mind shortly after became disturbed. I see it all. Let me say to you, Miss Underwood, that I do now and at this present moment hold very much the same opinion which you expressed at the time of your call. Allow me to show to you a certain bit of paper which I chanced upon during the thorough and conscientious discharge of my duties in our office. It came into my possession yesterday while I was dusting certain little-used law books of Hardangle's."

Mr. Slack drew an old purse from his pocket, and took from it a sheet of folded paper, which he handed to his companion. Rachel unfolded the paper, but found nothing upon it except the name Matthew Marsh, written again and again, perhaps fifty times.

"Well, what of this?" she inquired.

"Yes, yes—ah, yes, what of it? What indeed! Allow and permit me, Miss Underwood, to lead you to what I now without doubt consider its meaning. And first, I inquire whether it does not seem to you rather a strange and unusual occupation for a man, in these busy times, to cover a sheet of paper with his own signature? And second, let me beg and beseech that you give your attention to another queer feature. Do you not observe that the first signature is quite different from the last? Do you not see, as you run your eye down the page, that each one becomes more like the last? Do you not further take note that the first copy was made slowly and painfully, and that the last was written with comparative speed and certainty? And from this would you not judge it most likely that said form was before the writer's eye as a model? And should you not also say that said first signature being so different from said last they might easily have been written by two hands and pens?"

Rachel having answered all these questions in the affirmative, Mr. Slack proceeded:

"And now, Miss Underwood, we come to the crowning argument in the case. I, Mr. Silas Slack, who have spent the cream of my days in the selfsame office, I, being who and what I am, do assert and declare that the first of those signatures bears a very strong and unmistakable resemblance to the handwriting of one Mr. Respected Hardangle, and that the last, without doubt, is a very exact reproduction of the signature of Matthew Marsh, said Hardangle's brother-in-law."

"Well?" inquired Rachel.

"My charming and delightful partner in this honest move against a champion Grinder, I say this is damning! With which assertion you will readily agree when I inform you—I, who have seen the man—that Matthew Marsh was one of the witnesses whose names make the last will and testament of aforesaid Reginald Moreland a legal document!"

"God in heaven!" cried Rachel Underwood, springing wildly to her feet, as she saw the import of her visitor's words. "A forgery! You mean that the lawyer forged this name and the others too? You mean that?"

"I say and assert and swear that I mean nothing else. But do speak more softly—I have reasons. And let me finish: According to my definite and precise recollection, said Marsh and his son, and Hardangle's brother chanced to be in our office upon the very day that Mr. Moreland and the lawyer were putting the finishing touches upon the former's will. Old Moreland insisting upon it in his set and determined manner, these three men—I observing them—became witnesses to the execution of the paper. Now, Miss Underwood, that paper was left in Hardangle's safe, and it was, as you see I now believe, destroyed by the lawyer and a forged document put in its place."

"The villain! The villain!" exclaimed Rachel, resuming her seat.

"Softly, softly!" urged Mr. Slack. "I have reasons.

And let me go on to a full close. Concerning my finding of that paper, I have the theory that, while the old Grinder was busy upon his forgeries, he had the very little-used book in which I found it lying open upon his desk. He laid this paper upon it to take up a new sheet, and then, while he has been engaged in perfecting his familiarity with this signature and those of the other two witnesses, the pages of the book have without his knowledge blown over and hidden his evil work. Such, Miss Underwood, is the theory to which I give my full and hearty consent. You are much excited, my dear partner, much excited: have a care to speak softly. I have reasons."

"And I put that notion into your head!" cried Rachel, in a voice which revealed the timeliness of Mr. Slack's warning. "It was I who first roused your suspicions! And the lawyer took advantage of my madness to bluff me off! Did I in my mad frenzy accuse him truly! My child was remembered after all! And yet I don't seem to understand. How would he dare do it? Would not the first witnesses know the contents of the will?"

"Miss Underwood, they are each and all of them dead!"

"Oh, the villain! He waited for them all to die!"

"For all the witnesses—or so I surmise. But be that as it may, he did not wait for his friend and client to die. The freshness of the ink would have been clearly visible had the opening of the document taken place immediately after the testator's disappearance.

"And now, Miss Underwood, I have taken you into my confidence, and you have made my suspicions as good as knowledge. We are at present in a position to go forward together to obtain our full revenge. But before we lay our plans, let me make known to you a very strange and startling piece of news. It relates to the man now lying upon that bed. You knew at the time of your call upon Hardangle that Mr. Moreland had been murdered. I suppose you are still in possession of this fact."

"I remember it," assented Rachel, with sudden indiffer-

ence. "But you spoke of the man in yonder: you don't mean to insinuate that he was in the murder."

"Oh, Miss Underwood! I must beg and crave that you speak more softly. I have a reason. That man lying there asleep once cautioned me that I should not make this present theme the staple of my talk and conversation. To proceed. I do not insinuate any such thing as you hinted at. But you know as well as I that Reginald Moreland was put out of the way by a villain" (Mr. Slack was now fairly whispering) "whose common name and designation was Bags. Now, Miss Underwood, that said Bags had a friend and accomplice who was much associated with him in dark deeds. That accomplice (do not exclaim, Miss Underwood) was the same and identical man that now lies asleep in the next——"

"And his name is Shadow," coolly interposed Rachel, immensely to Mr. Slack's astonishment. "Ah, yes, I see plainly your reason for fear of being overheard. And were I in your case—I am free to say—I should be of your mind. I really can't blame you. So you know my friend, as you called him."

"Honesty forces and compels me," replied Mr. Slack, endeavoring to recover from his astonishment. "I do. Am I to infer, my charming partner, that my news was no news to you?"

"You are to infer just what you please," retorted Rachel in a voice which seemed to indicate anything but a charming business outlook for her partner.

"I trust that you are not angered," put in Mr. Slack hurriedly. "If Shadow is really a friend of yours, I crave that anything I may have said concerning him, may be overlooked in the interests of this undertaking. And now, Miss Underwood, what do you counsel and advise, what are our plans?"

"What are our plans, Mr. Slack? I don't know what yours may be, but my first and only one for the present is to be left to myself immediately."

"Really, now, my partner, you do seem offended."

"I am not."

"Then your words are most surprising. I expected you would be only too glad to plan revenge. Do you not see and realize that we have a man of wealth in our hands?"

"What I see, Mr. Slack, I see—and what I don't see, I don't. At present all I see is you sitting in my way. Out of that way I bid you get. But before you go, I want to say two things to you. First: One week from to-night, at nine o'clock, I want to see you again. Second: if during the time between now and then you use your knowledge upon the lawyer, I shall find it out, and Shadow shall find it out. Now, go!"

"Really, Miss——"

"Never mind about your reallies: I want to think."

"But partners, Miss——"

"Go, I say! or I'll wake——"

But before Rachel had finished, her little visitor had precipitately departed.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE TANGLED WEB.

As Silas Slack pursued his homeward way rubbing his dazed brow, Rachel again settled herself before her meagre fire, and was soon lost in thought.

"Six-and-twenty I am this night—and what years have they been, what years! Pleasant enough and sweet enough in the early days, and then burning and bitter as Hell! First, father goes wrong, and mother cries; then, Willie goes wrong, and she cries again; then, Rachel—her last hope—goes wrong, too, and no doubt she cried again. Oh, oh! my heart aches and is sick! How I have fallen! What a wreck I am! The offscouring of a mad-house, an outcast, a harlot, a companion to those rats and that murderer! I—I—is this I, or is it some one else! It seems as if it were both at once. I am myself and I am a wreck of myself. And what shall I do? Oh, what! Shall I break with the past? Shall I make a new start, as Robert said? Shall I go where I am not known and begin a fresh, clean life? Shall I? What giddy madness! I commence again! I throw aside the past! As easily might I throw aside myself: the past is myself. No, no, no! They'd put me back in the mad-house for a fool if I should try that. Rachel Underwood respected, set by, loved? Oh, my, oh, my! But enough of such nonsense. The past holds me and I love it while I loathe it—and I will cling to it! . . . . Well, that little idiot piped out some strange things, I declare. If he'd felt the way he feels now, he'd have kept them to himself. With all his talk he was too much afraid of the lawyer to move without me in the matter, and that's the whole reason of his coming here. One thing is pretty

certain, and that is that he'll keep it to himself now so far as the lawyer is concerned. He's as much afraid of Shadow as he would be of death itself, and who can blame him, as they're much the same thing. So you think Bags had the whole thing to himself, do you, my shrill little partner? And you think that your boss patiently waited for him to kill his man? Slack, my friend, those are your opinions, are they? You're a little keen, there's no denying, but those ideas are all bosh! And in the whole wide world I'm the only one who knows they're bosh. Little you know why I became so suddenly indifferent: little you guessed what I had discovered from your talk. Oh, but I see it all now! It was funny that I should have traced them to their den the very night before the murder, though I little thought they were in for a murder then. It was funny and yet it wasn't, either, for I thought perhaps father could tell me where Willie was, and I thought Willie could help me out of the awful fix I was in. Little did Shadow and Bags know that I saw their cops' clothes through the crack, and that I overheard their dark talk about their five hundred apiece, and I afraid to go in afterward for fear they'd suspect me and do me on the spot. No, I didn't suspect any murder then; but afterwards at the Madame's, when I read how Mr. Moreland had been fixed and how Bags had been found in officer's blues,—oh, I saw all through the murder then. And now little Slack has given me the forgery, and I see the whole thing! Morris Underwood, wait till morning! And you, Mr. Lawyer Hardangle, you murdering wretch, till I see my way clear, and I swear you'll swing for that. Ah, you black hypocrite! no one suspects such as you. Oh, no! I'd rather trust myself to Shadow and Bags any day than to such as you. Wait my time, wait my time! It will be hard for Robert to come. He seems to have given all my love to her—curse her fine eyes! Still he's got to, and then I'll teach him to love the child—he don't want even to think of it now. I told him it was a girl: it's just as safe in case of anything happening. Dear, dear, but won't it be nice to have a

fine house of my own for myself and my child. And if Robert won't live in New York, which I suppose he won't (he always said we'd live somewhere else), why, she shall know just the same that I am Robert's wife and my boy is his child, and that she hasn't beaten me with her eyes. And my eyes are as handsome as hers. Robert said they were as they were made, and I know what that means. Oh, he won't be ashamed of my looks when we drive out together! I'll just get the glass and have a look at them now."

And, suiting the action to the word, poor, deluded Rachel crept to her washstand, procured the bit of broken mirror, and holding the dim light in one hand and the glass in the other, sat admiringly staring into her eyes, did this poor, deluded Rachel.

Leaving her to stare to her heart's content and then to fall asleep in her chair for a troubled doze until morning, let us return to Robert Moreland. After parting from Rachel at the City Hall, he wandered heavily about the streets, too stunned to think clearly, too overwrought to trust himself in his wife's presence. The most he could do was to strive to banish from his face, as thoroughly as he might, its pale haggard look. Not that he was apprehensive of raising his wife's suspicions, he knew her nature and the nobleness of her love too well for that, but he dreaded the awkwardness of presenting himself before her in such a condition. His efforts were reasonably successful, the very exigency of the case serving to steady his nerves, yet it was with a sinking heart that he turned his steps towards home, and again stood before his own door. Florence opened it before he could use his key.

"I knew you would be awaiting me," he said. "Have you been worried almost to death?"

"I have worried some," replied Florence. "But, my dear, you do look so tired and worried! Has anything happened? Was your engagement more unpleasant than you anticipated, just as it was more prolonged?"

"Yes, the business was much more disagreeable than

I expected ; but besides that nothing has occurred, and you must not worry. I fear, Florence, if ever anything should happen to me, it would be more disastrous to you than to myself."

"I think it would," returned Florence. "Indeed, I know that I could suffer pain or distress far more bravely for myself than for you. But now let me get you a glass of wine and something to eat."

"As thoughtful at midnight as at midday," said Robert warmly. "No, I am in no mood for eating or drinking to-night : I am too full of something else. And now, Florence, you must not delay a moment longer, not only on your account, but on mine as well. I have some hard thinking and planning to do yet on this affair, and if I don't get at it I sha'n't get a wink of sleep before daylight."

"And you are so tired now ! Surely I have no need to fear that you are keeping this from me on my own account, Robert ! You know my love and the unpleasantness of suspense too well for that."

"Certainly I do," rejoined Robert. "You may be sure I place no such weak estimate on your love."

"Robert, forgive me, but are you treating me right? I am your wife and I long to be of assistance to you in this matter. Unless, therefore, it is of some very peculiar nature, I ought, I have the right to know it."

"My dear," said Robert with words dictated by a deep and cunning knowledge of his wife's nature, "I forgive you."

Florence Moreland was crushed by the insidious rebuke.

"Forgive me !" she cried. "I know that your secrecy is prompted only by your love and best judgment. I spoke under the impulse of my intense desire to help you."

"Do not ask me to forgive you," responded Robert, remorseful as soon as he had gained his point. "I am even unworthy that you should sin against me. Forgive me for my mean words. And now I must be at my thinking."

As his wife passed upstairs, Robert followed her with

a look of inexpressible pity and anguish, and then turning into his "den," sank down into an arm-chair and tried to look calmly and soberly into his own mind.

The mind of a man—what a wondrous spot! What a Titan's cave, what a fairy palace, what a magician's laboratory! How shall it be adequately described? By what power can the airy and tenuous cob-webery of thought be made to take on visible form? How shall the nimble and elusive ideas of a man be detained long enough to give an account of themselves? What charm shall call from their hiding-places the crowded images lurking in the dark corners of the brain?

The mind of a man—to what shall it be compared? The boundless sea, sleeping peacefully beneath the fannings of the breath of summer, knows not its eternal calms. The frothy deep, lashed to fury by the gale, and tossing up its mad billows to the stars, is no fit emblem of the wild commotion which the gales of passion and the storms of circumstance, raise within it. The limitless arch of heaven's blue, beaming benignly upon the budding springtime, and the bellowings of the thunder that roars out of the blackness of the midnight tempest—these are not the parallels of the mind's extremities. Infinite in its aspirations toward good, infinite in its degradations to evil; the throne which shapes all empires and all destinies, the sink whence proceed all confusions and anarchies; unchangeable by all the powers of heaven and hell, but turned by the slightest gust of passion; infinite in its hopes, infinite in its fears; infinite in its loves, infinite in its hates—the mind of man is without bound and without parallax.

Into such a miraculous spot as this, Robert Moreland essayed to look. And loud and fierce enough was the wild storm which he saw raging there. It was some time before the black storm-clouds cleared away sufficiently to allow him any distinct vision of the images obscured by them. But when, at length, he was able to formulate a train of connected thought, it took somewhat this shape:

"Oh, Florence, Florence, Florence, what have I done! What, oh, what! Oh, my poor, dear, brave girl! Do you think I did not see how eagerly you longed to know what my trouble was? Do you think I did not realize your superb self-control and strong determination not to give rein to your emotions? Oh, my wife, my wife, there never was a woman with such a soldier's heart! And it is mine, O God! utterly, almost madly, mine. And what am I that I should be the object of supreme devotion to such a heart? Oh, vile and wretched hypocrite, how would she loathe me, if she knew all! Alas! what a blind villain I was. I did not think, then, that it was so bad. I imagined, so far as I imagined anything, that I was only sowing wild oats. I was sowing the wind, and am in a fair way to reap the whirlwind! Rachel is as determined as death! She will not be bought, she will not be turned aside from her purpose. My God! must I face such a situation! Must I turn myself to such a fearful alternative! Is there no escape? Is there no way out of this dreadful, devilish snare in which I am entangled? She hates Florence—her hate is as bitter as death—and who can blame her? Who can blame her that she thinks Florence has supplanted her? Who can blame her that she thinks she has been robbed by Florence's beauty? Rachel first, and Florence second! O merciful heaven! that *was* the order! Ah, how my honeyed words of sin and deception well up now like a bitter, baneful fountain within me. Is it possible that I could leave one in broken-hearted tears and go smiling to the other? What sort of man am I with my one part of goodness and my other part of baseness? I am a puzzle to myself—I am a very devil's puzzle! I commit a bad action, then admit to myself that it is bad, do something good and kind which eases my conscience, and afterwards forget about the evil and begin to think I am quite blameless. Ah, what a smooth-spoken hypocrite! How I can deceive! And all because I almost delude myself, and speak out of a sense of real worthiness. When I deceive

(though I never tell a downright lie), as I have deceived my darling to-night—dastardly thought!—it does not appear to me like another man's deception, like shielding a villain, but rather like keeping back knowledge which would create a false impression regarding one who has indeed his weak moments, but who in the main leads a pure and blameless life. Ah, what a cursed, double, sneaking nature I possess! Florence, Florence, why did you love me! But I know why. I showed you only my best side. Hypocrite, hypocrite, hypocrite!

"And now—what? The rank offence has been committed, the wind has been sown, the harvest time has come. Now what? The prospect distracts me: I can scarcely look upon it sanely. Yet I must think carefully and soberly—for my sake, for Rachel's sake, most of all for *her* sake. This snare which has been so skilfully set and in which I am so helplessly struggling—how shall I extricate myself from it? My God, how! Put Rachel out of the way? That, of course, is not in the question. I'm not a murderer. Have her locked away in some private asylum? That's more thinkable; and yet even if I could accomplish it with that Shadow for her friend, and if it could be done in such a way as to prevent her spreading her story, I could not endure the thought of her being locked up day after day for no fault of hers, but only for my own, which has already brought ruin and desolation to her once happy heart. Oh, I could not do that—I could not! It were too cruel, too cruel after all the bitter anguish I have inflicted upon her. Oh, wretch, wretch, wretch, that I am! But I must be calm and see what remains. One of three courses. Either I must lay my hand upon my own life, or I must go to Rachel and flee with her, or I must stay by Florence and expose myself or be exposed. There is no other path! I could not escape with Florence and Rex to some other clime: that is quite out of the question. In the first place, I could give no reason for leaving my business, my friends, and all my associations. In the second place, Rachel, in her baffled anger, would hunt out my friends and learn

where Florence could be reached by letter, or else she would disclose my secret to them and so accomplish her end. No, there is no other alternative. God above! the awful choice is before me. Murder myself; go to Rachel and disappear in mystery, and hide my shame in foreign lands; stay by Florence, with what blasting, blood-chilling consequences! Oh, oh, oh! was ever a man in such a maddening plight before! Must I decide? Must I choose? Yes, yes, and that to-night. Go down into a suicide's grave and meet a suicide's Judge? Hang myself, drown myself, poison myself? Rush, bloody-handed, out of the world? Ah, I could not do that. I could not do it for my own sake, and I certainly could not do it for Florence's sake. Leave her thus suddenly and awfully, to lament my death, perhaps to bury my violated body? Leave her, under such terrible conditions, alone, alone, alone! That were cruelty indeed. Oh, my Florence, could anything be more dreadful for you than that? How I can see you even now begging and beseeching me with bitterest tears not to allow such a fearful, damning act a moment's room in my heart. No, no, no! I could not do it. But what is left? Only the choice between those two horrid alternatives—flight with Rachel, or exposure by her. I could not flee alone: that would be almost as cruel as the other. Leave Rachel behind to torment my wife? Leave Florence to undergo all sorts of insult and extortion to shield my name? Oh, no. If I flee Rachel must go with me. And so which shall I choose, which oh, which! Could I flee with Rachel? Laying aside its torture and ignominy to myself and all other outside considerations, could I flee with her taking Florence only into the account? Married to Florence and living with another? Joined in the most holy ties to my own dear wife, and at the same time to a harlot of the street! Ah, Florence, could I do that? Hypocritical as I have been towards you and base and unworthy as I am, could I do that—sink so low? I could not, I could not! My great love for you, my every instinct of manhood revolts against

such a course. No, no! You would sooner see me dead than that.

"And so I have excluded one thing after another, until logically my choice is made. I have nothing left but to open my heart to my wife. And that is the course you would bid me pursue. Yes, my poor unsuspecting wife, the choice to which I have narrowed myself and the course which you would entreat me to take, are one and the same. But if I comply, what will be the result? Oh, hideous, tormenting thought! Could I live and see the look, first of astonishment, then of incredulity, then of blighting disappointment and blinding anguish which would cruelly distort your loving and trustful face? Oh, could I endure to see the knowledge that I, this very Christmas night, had been reaping a harvest of infamy, slowly dawn upon your stifled heart? Could I brokenly inform you that it was the husband whom you think so charitable and kind that ruined Rex's pretty lady! Could I tell you that I had been unclean, and not die from shame and confusion? Oh, my love, my love, how could I rudely crush your perfect, divine trust in me! The very idea is enough to wrench my heart asunder: what, then, would the reality be!

"But what shall I do? Shall I follow the voice of duty? Go to her as she lies there more and more anxious each moment, and stand before that face and look into those eyes and condemn myself, blacken myself! My shame and anguish would kill me, and the sight of her face, swept with burning pain, would punish me after death. And that is my true course! O merciful God! *that is my true course.* Go to her, go to her? I cannot, I cannot! I shall go mad in this hellish trap which, all unsuspectingly, I laid for my feet. I cannot, I cannot, I cannot! Shall I flee after all? Shall I be a dastardly coward and hide my head and flee from the result of my own act, and leave her who is dearer to me than a thousand lives, exposed to wicked intrigues and unmerited contempt? Or, shall I take Rachel and become dead to all sense of decency and right and the sacredness of my love? O my God, my punishment

is greater than I can bear! Why have I not died before? Why did Florence consent to marry me? Why was I born for such a fate? Why was I given a nature to produce such results? What shall I do, what shall I do! My head is beginning to whirl. There is the clock striking two, and I know Florence is half wild with anxiety. I must decide, I must decide, and I cannot! I must act and I dare not! Oh, pitiful Heaven! my head is bursting! Oh, my head, my head! One more question to decide would drive me mad!"

And so the wild storm swept on and howled madly through this brain. Now it overwhelmingly carried all before it, now its fury fell, and reason asserted itself. The clock on the stairs struck three. One, two, three—how weird and prophetic it sounded! Was the time mad? Was it, too, driven on headlong by the gale? One, two, three—and still the tempest raged without abatement. Both love and duty demanded his laying bare the past to his wife's view. A hundred times he argued himself back to this conclusion. And just so often his soul would cry out: "I cannot, I cannot!" The case was desperate. He could leave Florence alone no longer. He rose from the chair which he had not once forsaken, but fell back from sheer exhaustion and giddiness. Again he rose, and this time retained his feet. *He was still undecided!* Turning out the gas, he passed into the hall. His face as he approached the mirror frightened him. His wife must not have the opportunity to observe it closely. He mounted the stairs: the light was dim in her room. Without turning it higher he went and sat upon the bed.

"My love," he said, "have you not been asleep at all?"

"No, Robert. Is your mind more easy? I fear you have completely exhausted yourself."

"I have reached no satisfactory conclusion, my poor girl, but I see my way more clearly. And now you must try to catch some rest before morning."

"I shall sleep best when I know that you are asleep, Robert."

And the old clock on the stairs struck four.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

THE next morning, Rachel Underwood opened her eyes shortly after the first cheerless rays of the morning had, with some difficulty, found their way to the rear of the tenement and forced a passage through her single streaked window. She rubbed her eyes, drew her shawl more tightly around her, gave the drowsy fire a poke, and, by the time her father awoke, had ready for him a pot of black, hot tea.

"Here, father," she said, placing a cup of the tea upon the unsteady little table by the side of half a loaf of bread, "here's your breakfast. The bread is a little old and dry, but the tea is strong and boiling."

"Seems yer kin be half-decent, if yer try," grunted Shadow, rather softening under the fragrant odor of the steaming tea. "What's this here knife fur?"

"Why, to cut your bread with, of course."

"Pshaw! that's fur too high-flied, fur me. I carries my own little conweniences about me. There! There's the boy fur bread." And Shadow hauled from his pocket an evil-looking clasp-knife, and gave it a turn or two upon his left sleeve. "Yes, it do seem as yer kin act respecterble-like, when yer has the mind."

"Oh, I'll be good to you, father, as long as I have you, but I have to know you, you know, or else I couldn't do anything with you. Here, here's a drop of brandy for your tea."

By this time, Shadow had sliced off a liberal chunk of bread, and was ready to soak it in his tea. But the added liquor quite overcame his immediate desire for food, and

raising the cup to his lips, he poured the beverage down his throat at a single gulp, waiving the ceremony of swallowing. Rachel refilled and re-flavored the cup, and as she placed it again upon the table, she remarked:

"I'm glad you like it, father, and I'm glad you think I'm good to you, because I ain't quite through asking you questions. And, being in a better humor, you'll feel more like answering them."

"Now, don't yer go and spile everythin' by quizzing at me again. Now don't, you Rach."

"I ain't going to spoil anything, father. If anything's spoiled it will be you that does it. And, to tell the truth, I ain't going to ask you a question, anyhow. I'm just going to tell you that something you said last night has come true. I'll give you another cup, father. It'll warm you up a bit."

"Now, why not shet yer talk right there, you Rach. Why not let it rest, and not run no risk of spilen things? Why not have everythin' pleasant?"

"I ain't wanting to make anything unpleasant, father. I say it sha'n't be me. But I'm going to tell you that one saying of yours has come true. You said that the first thing I knew, I'd be saying you croaked old Moreland yourself. Well, I say it now; or that you did half of it!"

"Yer unnat'ral hussy! I'll knife yer if yer don't shet up sech poll-parrotin'!"

"Father," continued Rachel, paying no heed to the ruffian's threat, and keeping her eyes fixed intently upon his face that its slightest change of expression might not escape her, "water will drown a man, won't it?"

"What if water will drown a man? I wish as it would drown some shes, too."

"And water will drown a rich man as well as a poor one, won't it?"

"Shet yer head, will ye?"

"Father, do you suppose a rich man will float better than a poor one? It's odd, ain't it, that when rich men are thrown into water by dark, they always float away,

but poor men who throw them in, float right along shore?"

"Shet yer head, I say!"

"Father, lawyers are nice men, ain't they?"

"What do I know about lawyers, I'd like ter know!" growled Shadow, but in spite of his dogged determination visibly starting. "What have we got ter do with each other? Oh, you jade!"

"Father, lawyers are good, respectable men, ain't they? Do you suppose they could be so bad as to get a man killed for money? Really, it don't hardly seem likely, does it?"

Shadow looked up from his bread and tea, his face black with passion.

"Yer sneakin' devil!" he cried. "Won't yer shet up? Will yer be a-spyin' into my concerns? Blast yer!" And with a terrible oath, he flung his knife viciously at his daughter's face. The murderous blade whizzed past her head and stuck quivering in the casement.

"There, now, father, you're forgetting yourself. Remember, I know——"

"Yer know!" roared Shadow. "Yer knows what'll do yer, yet! I wish it had o' hit yer, yer pryin' minx!"

"There, there," urged Rachel, coolly drawing the knife from the casement and replacing it by her father's hand on the table. "You see I'm not afraid of you. Have an eye to your actions, or I'll give you up to-day. My eyes weren't made to be stuck full of knife-blades. But you didn't answer my question. Do you think that any real respectable lawyer would hire two men—two partners, perhaps—to dress up in cops' clothes and do such a dirty piece of work as kill another man?"

"Give me ther bottle!" cried Shadow.

"No, father."

"Give it to me, I say!"

"Not another drop."

"Won't yer, yer miserable stiff-necked mule! I say yer will mind yer father!"

Shadow rose and made a grab at the black bottle. His daughter was too quick for him. Before he could seize it, she had dashed it to pieces against the stove.

"Hell fire!" cried the enraged man. "Do I set here and hear yer talk that way? I'll larn yer to diserbey yer father!"

So saying, the felon lifted his great fist and struck his daughter an unrestrained blow on the side of the head. The blow sent her sprawling into the corner. She did not cry for help. She uttered no shriek of pain. She merely rose and fixed her dark glance fearlessly upon her father's steely eye.

"Morris Underwood!" she said slowly, "touch me once more and you'll never touch me again! You called me a spy. So let it be! How did I learn that Jeremiah Hardangle hired Shadow and Bags to do his dirty work on Reginald Moreland? What proofs have I got? I'll not tell you. But there's one thing I will tell you, and that is, if you forget yourself again, I'll give you up for the murderer you are; and you'll hang up in the prison-yard till your face is black and your eyes burst out of your head. Strike your daughter!"

Shadow had resumed his chair while his daughter had been speaking. As she closed her damning words, his hand, trembling with anger, again fiercely seized his knife.

"Lay it down, father," said Rachel calmly. "It's of no use against me. Drive that into my throat and you're cooked forever. Listen, Morris Underwood! *I am not the only one who knows you!*"

"I'll slit that Moreland one, too!" cried Shadow.

"That Moreland one knows no more about you than a dozen others," replied his daughter.

"Who then?" demanded the ruffian.

"My business," returned Rachel.

"Tell me, dash you!" growled Shadow, flourishing his knife.

"When I'm so sappy as not to be my father's daughter,"

responded Rachel coolly. "No, no, father; don't try to work me: you can't."

"Give up yer proofs, yer devil's brat!" ordered the villain. "Squeal, or I'll knife yer if the hull world knows!"

"Knife away," retorted Rachel, quite undisturbed. "You can't scare me that way. I've known the bad ones much too long to turn faint at the sight of a knife, even if it is in your hand."

"Yer have, have yer, yer spyin' minx!" exclaimed the angry and disturbed murderer. "Yer ain't afraid of yer father, hey? Damn yer! I'll learn yer manners, yer imp of Satan."

The cursing desperado sprang from his seat, turned the key in the door, and leaped upon his defenseless daughter. Holding her fast by the head with his powerful arm, he bent back her neck and raised his knife aloft.

"Now will yer squeal?" he hissed.

"Hold on, father!"

"Hold on the devil! I thought I'd larn yer. Now spit it out—and quick!"

"Stick that knife into me and you swing."

"Swing till I rot, I'll kill yer if yer don't give up the proofs!"

"Kill on then, for I won't."

"Curse yer, yer will!" hoarsely cried the murderer, giving his victim a rough shake and lowering the uplifted knife until it pricked his daughter's throat. "Quick! or I'll fix yer by all the devils in hell!"

"Stick it in, father."

It was of no use: his daughter was too many for him. Cursing afresh, he threw her from him and again resumed his chair at the little table.

"I didn't quite think you would," she said. "And now that you've done your worst, we might as well just have a little understanding and settle the matter up. I'm pretty good stuff, ain't I, father?"

"Yer're a cursed, spyin' jade!" snarled the cowed ruffian.

"Bad names won't help you," Rachel went on. "Bad names won't hurt anybody. If they would I'd been dead long ago. Now see here, father: you haven't treated me very well this morning, have you? You know, if you got your dues, I'd send you right up to the Tombs. But I'm your daughter, if you don't like me, and as long as you behave I don't say you've got anything to be afraid of. You ain't a quarter as much to blame as that old hypocrite that hired you—curse him! So it's not my intention to give you up myself, and it is my intention to stand between you and such as have got proof."

Shadow, who had been sullenly glaring at the floor while his daughter had been speaking, suddenly raised his eyes and intently studied her face.

"Yer ain't a trickin' me, are yer, Rach?" he said. "Yer ain't gamin' yer father?"

"No, I ain't telling you anything but the truth," responded Rachel. "I'm going to stand by you, and as long as I do you're safe."

"And yer and that there Moreland one wasn't hatchin' up no tricks to play off on me? I don't twig onto that Moreland fellow's bein' here."

"No, no tricks, father. That Moreland was here on other business. Your hat's there on the shelf. But you don't need to hurry. It ain't likely we'll meet very soon again—perhaps never."

"Are yer goin' to skip, Rach?"

"Going to skip, father, unless something happens."

"Goin' far, you?"

"Mostlike."

"And yer're cock-sure as yer kin stand betwixt them as has the proofs and me?"

"Cock-sure, father."

"Ye're a good 'un, then, you Rach, considerin' everything."

By this time Shadow had reached the door and unlocked it. As he opened it and pulled his greasy hat close down over his eyes, his daughter stopped him. Crossing the

forlorn room to where he stood, she placed a hand on each of his arms, and said, looking up into his face with an expression in which repugnance and hope and memories of brighter days and an almost vanished affection and passion and remorse were all inextricably mingled :

"Father, you were going without telling me good-bye, and you haven't seen me in so long a time before, and aren't likely to see me for a longer time ahead. We've led strange lives, haven't we, father?"

Shadow made no response, but his face betrayed his surprise at Rachel's action and words.

"Yes, strange lives," Rachel repeated. "And now we're going apart, perhaps for good. But you are my father, Morris Underwood, and I am going to do it."

So saying, Rachel raised herself upon her tiptoes, and before her father divined her intention had drawn down his face to hers and kissed it.

"Good-bye, father."

Shadow grunted out something quite unintelligible, and shaking his daughter off, started down the stairs. Rachel watched him disappear in the dark well below her, and then turned back into her apartments, murmuring to herself :

"Strange lives, Morris Underwood. Strange lives, Shadow. Strange, strange lives, father of this wicked, scheming Rachel."

And Rachel replaced the teapot on the fire and took down the other half of Shadow's loaf from its place on the shelf.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### "I WILL BE REVENGED."

"Does your difficulty seem to press as heavily as ever?" asked Mrs. Moreland at the breakfast-table next morning.

"It presses very heavily," answered Robert; "but I feel as if I had cleared my way a little, at least, by my night of thought. Oh, Florence, you do look so troubled! And it is not your anxiety alone that is causing you pain: it is your ignorance of the subject that is weighing upon me. Do you think I do not see your unshakable resolution not to yield to your inclinations and increase my disquietude by questions and appeals? Ah, I see and I know full well the strength and wealth of a love that prompts such self-forgetfulness."

"It requires no great strength to trust you, Robert, and I beg you not to distress yourself because you find it wisest and best to keep your own counsels in this matter. Your judgment is my inclination. What a heart is yours, my Robert! You have no thought for yourself and that it is as hard for you to hide the matter from me as it is for me to be in ignorance of it. No, my husband, it requires little strength to trust in you."

"Not for you, Florence. It is the physician's aphorism: The strong know not of their strength: the healthy know not their health."

"Whatever it is," replied Florence, "it seems to me that it would be almost as easy to doubt God himself. Why, if all the good men in the city should come to me and charge you with some unworthy action, I should be perfectly sure you could explain it to my satisfaction."

Poor Robert! If his offence had seemed rank in the presence of Rachel Underwood's wrecked life and angry

hate, it smelt to heaven in the presence of his wife's pure and fervent love. And yet, this very love which caused his wretched secret to eat into his heart like acid, rendered all other solutions of his dilemma besides opening his inmost soul to his wife's inspection, absolutely inconceivable. He must do that which he knew she would wish him to do. Yes, the only way out of the toils in which sin and intrigue had tangled his feet, was now doubly clear to him. Come what might—he must tell Florence all!

Robert naturally was in no mood for business. One sickening thought held possession of his heart and mind, and no stir and bustle of trade could drive it out. Everything seemed vocal with his distress. "She would not have loved you, had she known," squeaked the pulleys as they hoisted their great bundles of leather to the second and third floors of the store. "It would break her heart if she knew," scratched his pen as it hurried nervously to the end of some letter of business. "You have a first and you have a second," rumbled the trucks as they backed up to the curb to be loaded and unloaded. And yet there was no escape. He must tell Florence, and he must tell her immediately—*and he would.* He would go to Rachel that very night, and announce his decision. And the child! How, O pitying Heaven, could he tell Florence about the child! How could he make known to her that he had had no thought or care for it—had not even taken the trouble to wonder whether it were alive or dead? And it was *his* child—the child of her husband that he had treated so! Oh, appalling, maddening reflection! Would it not be a shock as terrible as that which had laid his mother low? If it did not break her heart, would it not break her love? Could she forgive him? Could she believe that he loved her—had loved her at the time of their marriage? Would she still cling to his better side? The knowledge of what he had been and done would be, in all soberness, more bitter to her than the intelligence of his sudden death. The dishonor of his sin against Rachel,

the brutishness of his thoughtlessness concerning his child—she would have chosen death for him a thousand times. And yet the more he thought of it the more firm grew his conviction that she would not, could not, cast him off. Her love was too deep and all-absorbing for that. Even murder itself she had felt could not quench her love. Staggering as would be the revelation of his guilt, her love was so all-pervasive, that it must forgive even the peculiar heinousness of his transgression. Moreover, he had no choice : it was a decision between death and hell.

With such thoughts as these the slow-paced day dragged itself to a close. Again and again and yet again his burdened mind and overloaded heart journeyed back and forth through them, yet ever halted at the same spot ; and, when he left the office, as the shades of evening began to gather, it was with his conclusion of the morning unaltered. He would go to Rachel that night and declare his purpose. In accordance with this resolution eight o'clock again beheld him parting from his wife and boy.

"Florence," he said, looking into the loving face upon which another day of anxiety had left its mark, "I am doubting the wisdom of keeping this matter from you any longer. Indeed, you must know it soon. Try to distress yourself as little as you can in my absence. I do not expect to be gone long, though I cannot surely tell."

"I will be as strong as I can, Robert. And, oh, my love, if you are thinking it best to tell me soon, I shall try to be strong and endure the revelation bravely, whatever it may be. Weak as I am, I trust I shall not prove unworthy to be the wife of a man."

Rachel Underwood was fulfilling her agreement at the City Hall.

"So soon, Robert?" she said as she stepped forward to meet her victim with a sensation of triumph and delight. "Still I'm not surprised. I thought likely you'd decide in one day. But my ! it's been hard for you. You look five

years older than you did last night. I'm sorry. But come: don't let's waste time here. Keep close behind me."

Before Robert could make reply, Rachel faced about and began leading the way to her desolate home, following the same tangled course which she had taken the night before. Her rapid pace was not long in bringing them again within the four dilapidated, rat-gnawed walls which had overheard the conversation of the night before.

"And now, Robert," said the eagerly expectant young woman, "I suppose you've come to stay. Or rather not to stay. Of course this is no place for you, and, for that matter, for me either. Draw your chair up close to the stove and get as much warmth out of it as you can: the wind makes pretty free here for one like you. No, there's no one in there to-night, if that's what you're looking for. He was a very bad one, but he's gone for good. My, but you do look bad, Robert! Your eyes are all heavy and sunken. I'm glad my eyes don't look that way. I'm sure if they did, you'd never say they were handsome again. But it ain't unnatural after sitting up all night as you did. Does it surprise you that I know? Was I watching you? No, I'm only guessing. But I'm a pretty good guesser, ain't I? There's nothing like living about here and knowing the bad ones to make one shrewd. But I'm wandering. I said it wasn't unnatural that your eyes should look like that after sitting up all night. And it ain't. The unnatural part, come to think of it, is that you should have sat up all night at all. Why should you have so much to think about, Robert? What did you find in my words to trouble you so? You used to say that you were happier with me than you were at any other time, and that I was all the world to you. Besides, you were always saying in the old days that you could gaze at my eyes and never sleep for gazing; and last night you as much as said they were handsome yet. And now let me hear you say that you have come for good and all."

"Rachel, I cannot come!"

The young woman started as if the dagger's point had touched a vital spot.

"Cannot come!" she cried. "Cannot come! What do you mean?"

"That I have thought it all over again and again, and have decided I cannot come."

"You're fooling, Robert. You're trying me."

"I am speaking only the truth, woman."

"Don't call me woman! I hate it! You're not going to dare my hate, are you? You must be as crazy as I once was."

"No, Rachel, I am not crazy, though God knows I well might be. I have decided in view of all the facts."

Rachel sat gazing incredulously into her betrayer's face for a full half-minute, before she made any further remark. When she spoke it was in a changed, calm voice.

"Robert Moreland," she said, "I can hardly believe you. If this is not all a scheme, what do you propose?"

"I shall do the one thing I must do, Rachel."

"You mean you will be your own detective?"

"That is what I mean."

"But you have not peached on yourself, yet?"

"I have told nothing as yet except that I intend to tell. And now that you know my purpose, let me talk to you. My decision surprises you, yet it is final. As you have guessed I spent all last night in thought, and I have also spent this whole day in the same manner. I have not come to my conclusion hastily, but in full view of all the grief and pain which my revelation will involve. It surely cannot be possible that you are so little woman as to find pleasure in the prospect of causing so much suffering."

Rachel's eyes flashed lightning, as from out of the chambers of her soul arose the demon of jealous hate and the lesser demon of revenge.

"Robert Moreland!" she cried, "so much woman, you mean! Is it the nature of woman to enjoy being cast aside for another? Is it the nature of woman to rejoice over

her own downfall that another with fine eyes may be happy in her place? A pleasure to me to know that I shall cause suffering? Not to you, Robert, though you are much to blame; but to her—her—her—who ogled you out of my love with her handsome eyes!"

"Rachel," replied Robert, both grieved and astonished at the young woman's words, and the depth and intensity of the nature which they revealed, "your indignation is directed towards the wrong person. There is no one to blame for all you have suffered except myself."

"Don't tell me!" broke out Rachel, and there was a wild fire in her eye which whispered "mad-house." "I've seen her eyes and I know how she works them. Oh, don't tell me that, Robert Moreland, for I won't believe it. You used to love me; you used to think there was nobody in the world half so full of love and pleasure as I. How is it that you seem to feel so different now? Oh, I know, Robert; don't tell me!"

Robert waited a moment for the fierce storm which his words had aroused to abate a little, and then proceeded in a less exciting vein.

"I was about to ask you," he said, "what sum would be a consideration to you, seeing that I cannot come to you, to restrain you from compelling me to be my own detective."

"Sum!" cried Rachel. "Sum! Money? I can put out my hand to-morrow and be almost as rich as you. Money? It is not money I want: it's you. I want you for myself, and I want you because she sha'n't have you. You were about to ask me that, were you? I was just going to ask you something, too. Tell me, Robert: ought you not to have married me?"

Robert did not reply.

"Answer me," persisted Rachel. "Ought you not to have married me, and given your child a father?"

"Rachel! Rachel! I do not know!"

"Robert, Robert! you do know; I see you do. It was the least you could do to make things right."

"Even saying that it was, Rachel (and God knows I feel bitterly for you!), let us not consume time in talking about that now. Whatever it was, it is all changed now."

"Changed!" cried Rachel, with bitter scorn. "Changed, because now you have married a second wife? Ah, Robert, let us see how changed. That is just what I have been working up to. Let us see how changed. Tell me, Robert: what would that second wife of yours say if she knew you were here to-night, and what you were here for? Do you know what she would say if she knew you had a first wife? Do you know, Robert?"

"You ask me, Rachel: I will tell you. She would say, 'Come back to me.'"

"You are crazy, Robert Moreland! That is the last thing she would say. You are not a woman or you would not think it. Are you so blind as to suppose that any woman wants a man so badly that she is willing to take him at second-hand? No, Robert, not at second-hand: that would not be natural. I'll tell you what she would say. She would shrink all up in a heap, as if seized with some sudden, deadly pain; she would grow pale, and she would point her pretty finger at you and say, 'You hypocrite! go back to your first love!' It would be real cross in her to say it, but that is just what she would tell you. She would not have loved you when she did, had she known you, and she would not have you now. Come back, Robert, to one who does know all, to one whose eyes are as they were made, and to one who does want you!"

"It is of no use, Rachel. You do not believe your own words, and I know they are false. I cannot come to you. And so we must call that decided. But, before I go, I want to say something more. And first, I want to plead with you again to forsake this miserable life here, and be again the girl you once were. Oh, Rachel, believe me, it causes me intense anguish to see what I have done. I loathe myself for it. I did not foresee the awful results it would have upon you. And now, although you force me

to betray myself, yet I beseech of you take my money and begin anew. There is nothing which I can rightfully do, that I would refuse to do to place you back where you once stood. But if I should die a thousand deaths I could not undo the past. What is done cannot be undone. It can be mended, but only by your own efforts. I beg you, I implore you, work your way back to the light!"

For a moment Rachel hesitated. For a moment she seemed to feel the power of goodness striving within her, but only for a moment. The past had shattered her woman's nature too rudely for her to undertake to remould it into purity and virtue.

"Enough of such stuff!" she exclaimed. "Enough, and more than enough. I have made my bed, and I will lie down in it. Robert Moreland, you may have looked very carefully at this business; but there are some things that you have not seen. Once more I ask you: Are you coming to me?"

"Rachel, I have answered that question. I will tell her—and then I have done all."

"All that a fool would do! Listen, Robert Moreland! I will tell you some things you have not thought of. You imagine that my power over you will be gone the moment you become your own detective. You imagine that then you have cast off Rachel Underwood forever. You will take the one bitter dose that for the rest of your life you may have to dose no more. But I tell you, Robert, that imagination is a lie!

"You are mad—downright mad! Why force me still further? Why trifle? Don't you know I won't have it? Curse her, curse her, I say! It's that second of yours that's holding you. She's snared you and you can't break away from her spell. You think she would love you and stick by you; but I tell you she would not! She's high and proud and she'd despise you! Oh, oh, how I hate her with her eyes! I hate her for doing me out! Are you crazy that you dare me so? You vaunt your

second love before me, *Mr. Moreland.* You know how I hate her and her eyes ; you know how your love for her must burn me to madness like hot coals. You know all this, and yet you cast your love in my teeth. It is well. Keep it in mind while I now warn you for the last time. I shall break no laws, Mr. Moreland : I shall not even be a nuisance. I have lived too long among the bad ones not to have learned to be shrewd. But I warn you, Mr. Robert Moreland, by that great but guilty passion in which you have been snared, trifle no more, dare me no further ! If you do, I will be revenged on your second fearfully. I will punish her till she will wish she had never been born. I can make her die a hundred deaths before her time. No, do not begin to talk law and penalty to me : I tell you I shall break no laws. I shall not touch a hair of her head. But, Mr. Moreland, be warned. Do not in the heat of passion expose your wife to my hate. I am not talking stuff : these are no empty words. I will follow you to the end of the world, *but I will be revenged.* Do you hear me ?"

Hear ? It seemed to him that he heard with his heart !

"Do you hear ?" repeated Rachel, almost wildly. "I will be revenged ! I will have justice upon her for doing me out of you and for murdering my child. You start, Mr. Robert Moreland. Yes, for murdering my little girl. You know what I mean. If the little thing withered away because it had no decent home and no father to care for it, whose fault was it ? Don't tell me it was mine : I was wild, mad ! Do you hear ? I will be revenged !"

Rachel's eyes were flashing and glaring like a lioness robbed of her whelps. Her face fairly gleamed with the fury of her emotions. Robert's eyes had never beheld such a fearful sight. He almost feared she was being stripped of her reason on the spot. Was there no limit to her fiendish inventions ? Well, well might he draw back. Expose his wife to the powers of darkness and vengeful hate ? What would the desperate woman do, baffled and enraged and with the forces of evil at her command ?

The case had been terrible before : now it was indescribably and madly terrific ! Rachel had kept her highest trump till the last. Yet, staggered and dismayed, and gazing terror-stricken over his swelling sea of troubles like some shattered wreck over the tossing ocean about to engulf it, Robert Moreland had no thought of altering his course. Unspeakably appalling as it was, it was yet less appalling than any other. Then, too, it was the right course. His heart was a very spring of acrid and poisonous waters, and his brain a down-flowing fountain of anguish and dread, but he could not alter his decision. Death or life, he should, he would tell Florence all.

"Rachel," he groaned, "I cannot come !"

"Robert Moreland, I say you're a fool ! Any idiot would be wiser ! You don't know what you're doing ! You would see her in Hell first if you did. And listen : What if I do not seek my revenge to-night ? What if I do not seek it to-morrow ? What if I do not seek it next week ? What if I do not seek it next month ? What if I do not seek it next year ? Listen well, Mr. Moreland : Will yours be a happy life with my hate hanging over you ? Will it, Mr. Robert Moreland ? Ah, Robert, Robert (I will call you that name once again), unless you come to me, you will curse this night and your love's mad choice ! "

"Rachel," responded Robert, his head fairly whirling with the mad tangle of his anguish and dread, "it is of no use. I cannot, cannot come ! Let us go. We need not talk longer. Remember my willingness to help you, my remorse for my sin. Come, let us go."

Rachel saw she could avail nothing. She arose without another word, threw her red shawl over her shoulders, and led the way down the old stairs, along the rogues' runway, through the low passage to the street. In a few moments they stood at the spot where they had parted the night before.

"Shall you tell her to-night, Robert ? "

"Not to-night, Rachel ; the morning is better."

"Good-bye, Robert."

"Good-bye, Rachel."

And the winter wind, soughing drearily, drawing sighingly about the marble corners of the great Hall, moaned bleakly :

"Not forever, not forever!"

## CHAPTER XX.

### "I FEELS IT."

"NOT to-night," repeated Rachel Underwood scornfully, as she turned away, "not to-night, nor to-morrow night, nor the night after that. Don't I know how it will be? Oh, I guess I do! He thinks he's strong and decided, but don't I know? Blast her eyes! they won't always be so bright, I'm thinking. And blast her cheeks so pink and white! Ah, but they shall be all white. A little girl, was it, Robert? And she is dead, is she? Oh, but I am a little shrewd: I can think quick when I have to. Rose Maitland to Joe Hamerton. What a scheme, what a scheme! Will you let me tell your wife who her sister's husband is, Robert Moreland, rather than to come to me? Oh, what a scheme! And it's my only chance."

Communing thus with herself, Rachel did not pursue the way by which she had come, but instead turned up a dingy street three blocks above her own, and came after a half-mile's walk to the door of a dilapidated tenement. Into this tenement she glided, and to its fourth and last floor. Noticing here a timid stream of light making its way from one of the apartments into a small, public room next to it, she entered the room and pressed her eye to the crack. A single glance covered the entire scene within. The apartment was an unceiled attic, with a slanting roof in the rear—a frail barrier indeed against the winter winds that were whistling over it. The floor had two patches of worn red carpet upon it—one patch doing duty as a drugget, beneath a small, pine table; and the other lying in front of a heap of old iron which bore a slight resemblance to a cooking-stove. A washtub in one corner under the slant roof, and at the opposite side a

wooden bedstead; a tiny clock and a few old trinkets upon the board mantel; a cracked looking-glass on the right wall opposite the stove; a teapot upon the back of the stove, and some blue shelves which amply discharged all service required of them as a substitute for pantry and cupboard, completed the inanimate portion of the picture. Rachel bestowed only a cursory glance upon these, and fixed her gaze upon the two inmates of the room. They were a woman with a thin, wrinkled countenance, and a boy, whose old and pinched little face would have spoken to any beholder of eight or nine hard, inhospitable winters.

Both were sewing by the light of a single candle. As Rachel had put her eye to the crack, the woman threw her work upon her lap and clasped her hands tightly over her breast, to relieve a little, if possible, the hollow, wrenching cough which seized upon her; and the boy raised a pair of large, sympathetic eyes from his work to watch her.

"My!" exclaimed Rachel to herself, "that's a bad hack you've got, wife of Morris Underwood! And how you've grown old, and wrinkled, and gray since I saw you! You've seen trouble—sights of it. And can that be he—my child? Has time skipped away so fast! Such a pretty little fellow, too. But from your looks, I ain't going to get you out of your cold garret much too soon. You mustn't die! Dear me, where should I be then and my scheme? Such a fine scheme, too!"

The poor woman within ended her exhausting cough with Rachel's reflections, and again took up the heavy cloak which she had been compelled to drop. She stitched rapidly, nervously, as if she already heard the foot of the rent-gatherer upon the stairs. The boy, seeing her again at her task, resumed his own, not with equal rapidity and skill, yet with a deftness that was sad at his age, for he was only past six years. Without lifting his eyes from the large black buttons which he was fastening to another cloak, he spoke, evidently continuing some conversation which the cough had interrupted.

"And why does you think so, mammy?"

"Why does I think what, Joe boy?"

"Why, what you was just a-saying. You allowed as I'd come to something good, reckoning as I was good myself."

"Well, Joe boy, I doesn't rightly know; but I reckons as I feels it. And, leastwise, you mustn't break my heart by doing anythink as is wrong."

"Happen not, mammy, happen not. But I was minding to fetch you another ask: Reckon you does feel it, does you happen to feel as that there good as is coming is money?"

"I hain't figured on that, Joe boy, seems as you can't figure much on feelings. But I allow as that were a part of it."

"Then your feelings is mighty good feelings, mammy; and mostly I tries to believe them. But when I sees so many bad boys round here a-getting things with pick-pocketing and stealing, happen as I does sometimes not just believe as the good what is coming is money."

"May be not, Joe boy. But it's my heart as you mustn't break, money or not. Money is one think, and heart is another think. Money can be lost and money can be found: but hearts once broke is broke for good and forever. And now, Joe boy, you best give over stitching for to-night. You've stuck to it faithful—for a boy."

"No, mammy, not yet. You works a bit harder nor I, and I doesn't like to sit by and see you going at it alone. You's been at it since long afore I was up, and I allows as you're going to be at it long after I'm in bed. I'll stick at it a while yet—till I get all these big, black wheels on, leastwise. I wants it to be money so as we can live somewhere where it ain't all roof and cold; and so we can have a oil light; and so we can have a ride in the horse-cars as many times a week as Saturday afternoon."

"Well, well, Joe boy, you're a good one—wery! Yes, old mammy do have to work pretty nigh hard; but coal is high, boy, and tea is high and everythink's high to us

sort—and rent is higher as all. And we must keep out of the work-house, Joe boy."

"He ain't in any danger of coming there," thought Rachel at the crack. "Lawyers shall support him. Oh, you little chap, you don't know your real mother is looking at you! They thought I didn't know my own business when I dropped you there. Didn't I, though! I knew she was coming, I guess. And the little fellows he sent after me couldn't find me! Of course they couldn't —not with me watching them from the cracks of the door between the two houses across the street. What a grand scheme!"

"Try not to cough, mammy," urged the child. "Coughing ain't rightly good for nobody. It tires them, and they's mostly tired already. And tell me about them as is gone—them as I never saw."

"I've told you so often, Joe boy! I used to tell you when you was that little that you didn't rightly know a cloak from a needle; it seemed to do me good—made my heart a little easier-like. Oh, yes, there was Morris—my man. What a good smart one he was! He made fifteen dollars a week at the factory, and he always brought it home to me, every Saturday night. Not to here, boy, not to here! We didn't live here in them good days. No, Joe boy, he rightly loved me then, and I loved him. I'm afeared as he doesn't love me now—even if he's alive at all—but I loves him, Joe, just as much as ever I did. Women ain't made like men, boy. Well, you know as how we had two outside of you. There was Willie—Oh, dear, there it comes!"

By "it" mammy meant her dreaded cough, and it racked her piteously for a full minute before she could proceed.

"Yes, there was Willie—and another—a girl. I never says her name out, Joey—she went that bad, that wery bad!"

("'That wery bad,'" repeated Rachel at the crack; and if there were tears in her eyes, at least no one saw them.)

"Two," continued mammy, giving the cloak a sudden turn and threading her needle as if by instinct, "two. And bright and sweet enough they were. Oh, if I could only think as that they was that bright and sweet now! But, oh, Joe! you knows how it went. You knows as how Morris began to change way back years afore you was born. How he took to the drink—and what wonder, with it poked under his nose every other step along the street, and shoved at his mouth every noon-spell by the men at the factory. Yes, you knows how he came home later and later of nights, and brought home less and less of his earnings to me. Oh, Morris, Morris, doesn't I remember the first night you came home reeling drunk! Doesn't I remember how you took cross to me? And doesn't I remember the night you first struck me—you as used to love me so! I cried all night long; and I could cry now only it would blur my eyes for stitching—and everythink is that high! Well, well, I pleaded with him, you knows, Joe boy, but it wasn't no sort of use. He only got mad, and he grew worse all the same, until we moved further down-town and lived in four stinking rooms! And so it went—worse and worse. Before long he didn't come home only when he felt like it, or when he would come to pawn something for the drink, and I had to move up here—rent were that uncommon high—and take to stitching and cutting to support the childers. Then he got in jail for drinking and for thieving; and, oh, dear, oh, dear! he got to be a pretty bad man, I fear—and my Morris, too! And about them two others as you never saw—you knows it all now. How Willie went bad—as how could he help going with such a bad one for a father, and with bad ones all around him! Yes, yes, he went bad, and I hasn't seen him in such a long, long time! And the other one—you knows about her, too. How I put her out to work in a good family to get her away from here, and how as some wicked man—I never knew who—fooled her, and how as I hasn't heard of her since. Oh, Joe boy, it's an awful crime for a girl to be born about

here at all; but it's more as I can say for her to be born that pretty as that one were. I ain't spoke her name since; but I can see her fine, big eyes now—and I loves her yet, boy—loves her yet!"

("'Loves her yet,'" repeated Rachel at the crack; and if there were tears in her eyes this time, at least no one saw them.)

Mammy's overflow of feeling did dim her eyes notwithstanding "everythink were that high," and naturally enough her repressed emotions brought back her cough. When she recovered from both, she found the boy's great, round eyes fixed meditatively upon her.

"Mammy," he said slowly, "I'm thinking whether, whether, if I should ever come onto him as were that mean to her as we doesn't say, whether it would be bad if I was to——"

"There, there, boy,—I knows what you is wanting to say. No, no, Joe boy, don't ever you lift a hand agin him! He'll have his punishment—I feels that for sure and certain! Oh, oh, so mean and bad it were to fool a poor, low one with his high love—so mean and bad! But you'll never lift your hand agin him, Joe boy!"

"Happen not, mammy."

"No, boy, you'd only be wrong and get into trouble if you did. The high ones steps on us sort nigh as how they please. But Joe boy, if you ever does come onto those two as you've never seen, happen as you'll tell them as how she loved them yet. It might do them some good. And if you should see my man, you'll tell him the same thing, too. And now, Joe boy, I'm going to tell you somethink—I've got to tell you, or else you might find them and not know it. My right name ain't Hamerton at all!"

"Why, mammy, how funny! Then my name ain't that neither. How funny! What did you take a wrong one for?"

"Well, Joey, I'll tell you. Hamerton were my rightful name afore I were married—afore I married Morris. Then

it were Underwood. Morris Underwood were his name. But since he went so bad, and since they all went that bad, I took my first name again. And so Willie's name were Underwood, and her name it were Rachel. There, now, I've said it, boy. It do sound rightly funny to hear it spoke out again; but now you will know them if you meets them and hears them called by name. Willie and Rachel Underwood—oh, dear, oh, dear! But we'll keep the names to ourselves, Joey, and we won't talk about them ourselves neither. But you won't forget, will you, boy? And, if you ever does see them, tell them that I loved them—loved them."

"Happen I will, mammy. And I'll tell them as how you cried at their being so bad, and how they must stop and be good. There the buttons are all on,—plunk."

"That's a good Joe boy; and he must stop now and go up to bed."

"Up to bed!" Mammy always said up although the bed was just across the room under the slant roof. "Up to bed." It was a sad habit which spoke of better days; but little Joe understood it, and being quite tired out—faithful little fellow that he was—he immediately went up.

Rachel Underwood crept down the stairs and darted off towards home.

"I feel sort of loose and queer about the heart," she said, as she hurried along. "Oh, my, my, but she has had trouble! Loves us yet—loves us yet! Oh, my little fellow, you won't lie there long. I see my way right through, now. You're going to keep those names to yourselves, are you? Well and good—well and good. Oh, I see it plain enough. And you will lift your hand against him in a terrible way, but you won't know it. If I can only wait so long! But I can—I can! For it's bound to work! I'm bound to win! Oh, pink and white, pink and white!"

And still mammy's needle flew, stitch, stitch, stitch, as if determined to prick the life out of something; and the little clock on the mantel pointed midnight before she

folded up her finished cloak with a weary sigh. Then she threw one of the patches of carpet over the bed, and taking the candle in her hand, stood a moment over the sleeping boy. As she gazed at his innocent face her eyes filled with tears, and stooping over she kissed his brow and whispered:

"I feels it—I feels it!"

## CHAPTER XXI.

### A SHORT CALL FROM PHILIP MAITLAND.

With aching brow, burdened heart, and tired body, Robert Moreland pursued his homeward way after bidding Rachel Underwood good-bye at the City Hall. His whole frame seemed one throbbing agony. He was as a man gazing down from the giddy heights of some beetling cliff, ere he plunged into the boiling caldron below. He had left desolation in his wake: he must still bring desolation in the future. He would not tell Florence that night: he would tell her in the morning, or, still better, when they were seated in the library during the evening. Blighting, soul-devastating task—how could he do it! But there was no escape: he would do it the very next evening. He had almost reached home when a quick step, which he had been too much absorbed to notice, came close behind him, and Philip Maitland's voice called out:

"Well, old man, you're walking slowly for you. Time was when I should have steamed along after you in vain, especially as you're homeward bound."

"Holloa, Phil, is that you?" replied Robert, trying to speak carelessly, but with a sudden chill at his heart. "You're almost a stranger these days. Yes, I've been taking it pretty slowly. The fact is I have had a most unpleasant business on hand for a couple of days, and it was occupying my thoughts so completely that I did not hear you coming till you spoke. Here we are: come in."

"I will, just a minute, though it is rather a late hour for such fashionable callers as myself. There's Flossy at the door already. Well, sister mine, how are you?"

"Why, Phil!" exclaimed Florence, as she stole an anxious look at her husband's face. "How does this

happen? I didn't really suppose we were ever to see you again. You're working too hard: you look all tired out."

"Well, to tell the truth," responded Philip, "I am a little tired: haven't been playing all the time for the last few days. Christmas brings me some extra work. But I declare, you look as tired as I feel—every bit. And if you had seen Bob creeping along when I overtook him—Why, man, what's the matter? You're sick."

Florence's heart contracted.

"Oh, no, I'm not," returned Robert. "Did you ever know me to be sick? It's only worry over that matter I told you was troubling me. It's the same with Florence. But with you it's downright hard work. Come into the library and warm up."

Philip Maitland was far too delicately polite to press the subject further. His mission in life was to cheer.

"Let me see," he said. "It must be a full month since you were down at my headquarters, and I haven't seen either of you since. I've simply been over head and ears and heart in work."

"Tell us a little about your work," said Florence.

"About my work? Well, you know what has been my special endeavor of late. It's that Hall, which, after these years of discouraging endeavor, I am giving my days and nights to erect down in the midst of that seething mass of humanity below Fourteenth Street; there where the tides of evil from a score of countries meet and toss up the vile froth of vice to the choking of all that is good or beautiful; there where there are depths of degradation not surpassed by any nation on the face of the earth; there where love is the synonym for the brothel; where the saloon is the only temple, and the code of the prize-ring the only gospel; there where life is at its lowest ebb; where Hell gapes from below; where men and women are devils. Right in the slimy swash of such currents I must have this hall for public assemblies of all sorts, from religious meetings to comic operas. In connection with it

there must be baths and bowling-alleys and billiard parlors, and a reading-room and a music-room (the worst men like music). Now, all this exposes me to a good deal of criticism. You wouldn't think it, but I get quite a share from the clergy themselves. They say now again, as they have said about my present little establishment, that I am coming nearer to a billiard-saloon than I am to a prayer-meeting. I might reply to them that I do not wonder at their disfavor, inasmuch as some of them have lately pulled out of the seamy districts and taken their congregations up-town, where there is more room and the air is purer; but I content myself with saying that a dog can't be lured with hay, nor a horse with raw meat. What wonder that the church is so signally failing to reach the masses in New York when it gets so far away from them that it can't touch them with a ten-foot pole. No wonder that the saying is gaining credence that the way to heaven is via the elevated to Harlem. I have never given up the fight, however, and now I must have my Hall as a sort of visible nucleus around which my sheep may congregate.

"But I fear my fanaticism is rendering me rather selfish to-night. I am sure you two ought to be in bed and asleep this minute. But I'll tell you what I'll do before I go. I'll relate to you a rather amusing incident in which I had a share. It isn't as exciting as that experience with the old miser and the little waif I found tied up in the bag in the ash-barrel, but perhaps it will divert you and leave you in a good mood for sleep. In the course of a visit I made to a strange tenement a few evenings ago, I knocked at a door on the second floor and was admitted into a small apartment filled almost to bursting with a table, several rickety chairs, a cooking-stove, a man, his wife and four children. And who do you suppose the man was, Bob? It was our talkative friend Slack. I suppose you've heard of him, Florence. He's quite a character."

"Oh, yes, I've heard about him from Robert. He's

that funny little man with the high voice and the long clothes, who works in Mr. Hardangle's office."

"Yes, that's the man. Well, the family had just finished their dinner—I suppose it was dinner, for there was rather too much smoke for supper—and were in the midst of a pretty heated discussion. Slack immediately recognized his caller and I'll give you the ensuing conversation, as nearly as I can.

"'Oh, good evening, Mr. Maitland. Be seated and take that chair. I am honored. My wife and children, sir. You find us in a rather heated state of dispute, this evening. Allow me to explain the matter that you may hand down to us from the bench your opinion of it. My eldest and first-born child, Milly, yonder——'

"'And worse luck it was for me!' interrupted Milly, a slim, sour-looking slip of a girl.

—"'Yonder,' repeated Slack majestically, 'has been so foolish, so low-down and vulgar——'

"'It's a lie!' cried the girl. 'He's just as respectable as you and your talk!'

—"'And vulgar,' went on the unmoved little fellow, 'as to allow, suffer and permit a disreputable and ill-bred young rascal to ask for her hand and heart.'

"'And he'll have them, too,' broke out the incensed Milly. 'He loves me and I love him!'

"'I'm sure it's love, Silas,' here interposed Mr. Slack's wife.

"'And so am I!' joined in Milly's sister, who had endured her sister's unmerited disgrace as long as she could. 'I saw him kiss her in the hall, only last night!'

"'The scoundrel!' cried Slack. 'But peace, peace! Love? Did I hear something about love? What does such a miserable scapegrace know about love? Nothing—absolutely nothing! The name, Mr. Maitland—I have the honor—by which I have always designated said low-born person is 'O'Brien Brat!'

"'His name is Charley O'Brien!' shrieked Milly. 'His name is Charley and I love him!'

"'This aforesaid Brat,' continued the little man, 'has lived in this same apartment-house with me for some years. He has pestered me and insulted me. And now, all at once, he tries to make himself very agreeable, in order that he may thus win my approbation of this affair —to say nothing of dowry.'

"'We'll do it without your say!' cried Milly, hotly.

"'Naturally, Mr. Maitland,' went on the calm little fellow, 'I am in no great humor to consent to this thing. Is he able to support her? Yes. But in no such manner as has been hers all her days. What is he? Nothing but an office-boy in a gentleman's office!'

"'That's all you are yourself!' screamed Milly.

"'Peace!' again commanded Slack. 'Will you, in your wild passion, insult your father to whom you owe your very birth—which is more than a good many children about here can say. Will you, in your perverse blindness, compare a man who has been engaged in the law his whole life long, to a mere office-boy? But now, Mr. Maitland, I appeal the case to you. Knowing and being acquainted with all these particulars and facts, do you counsel and advise me to give my consent and approbation?'

"Thus appealed to, and seeing that a runaway and quite informal match would be the result of refusal; and also thinking that I perceived a covert willingness on the little father's part to be freed from the support of his daughter, I said:

"'Mr. Slack, love is a strong passion. I advise you not to stand in its way. Would it not be a better course, and one more fitting to yourself, to forgive and forget the past?'

"'You're a nice gentleman!' quickly cried Milly.

"'A strong passion. You know it yourself, Silas', murmured Mrs. Slack.

"'Oh, won't it be jolly!' cried a young urchin standing by the stove. 'We'll have cakes and rozzens!'

"'Peace!' ejaculated Mr. Slack. And then he con-

tinued, caught by the form of my words : 'Perhaps the way you suggest would be most fitting to one of my position.'

"'Oh, there's his step now!' exclaimed Milly, rushing to the door, and dragging her rather unpromising-appearing ideal into the room. 'Oh, Charley, my dear, come in! It's all right. He's going to let it all go!'

"And Charley came in, looking rather sorry, I thought, that peace had taken the place of war; and, to make a long story short, after a pompous forgiveness by Mr. Slack, I asked the fond lovers the necessary questions, gave them all the good advice I thought they could hold —and married them on the spot. And now I'm going."

"Dear good Phil!" said Florence after her brother had gone.

"All gold," assented Robert. "I do hope he has relieved the strain on your heart a little. I was detained much longer than I expected to-night, but I shall have to go no more. It is finally concluded. Would God I could keep it from you! I cannot. However, we are both too fatigued to talk about it to-night. To-morrow evening, unless something unforeseen occurs, I shall be forced to let you know all."

"Robert, my love," answered Florence looking up hopefully into her husband's face as they rose to retire, "I am all at a loss to conjecture what your secret is; but this I know, that no man whose heart urges him to give five thousand dollars for the uplifting of the down-trodden, as you gave Phil for his Hall, can have any secret of which his wife need be ashamed."

## CHAPTER XXII.

### A TENEMENT GUESS ON BROADWAY.

THE following afternoon, just as the short winter's day was closing in, Rachel Underwood, with her red plaid shawl gathered closely about her shoulders, might have been seen parting from the pressing throng which filled the inhospitable street, and entering the building upon whose second floor Jeremiah Hardangle still pursued the law, and where Silas Slack in his superabundant garments still pursued the lawyer. Mr. Slack, who was dutifully at his post in the waiting-room, gave her a surprised nod as she entered, followed by a knowing but rather uneasy wink, as if the remembrance of his late unceremonious exit from her quarters was still green in his memory; and finally, having admitted her to the lawyer's presence, he bestowed upon himself a second more knowing wink, and took his stand at the key-hole. Lawyer Hardangle pushed his chair back from the desk as his strange client entered, and scanned her face questioningly.

"Well?" he asked.

"Remember me?" rejoined Rachel.

The lawyer again studied her face a moment, and thought he did.

"Yes, of course you do," returned Rachel, coolly. "You seem to have an excellent memory for faces. Perhaps you remember my name, too."

The lawyer still kept his hard, steady gaze fixed upon his questioner's face. It was the face of insanity no longer.

"It is, perhaps," he said, "not very material whether I do or not. However, I have a good memory for names. Unless I mistake, yours is Miss Underwood."

"Yes, I knew you hadn't forgotten it—Rachel Underwood. No doubt you could tell me when and on what errand I was here before?"

"If I could not, Miss Underwood, perhaps you could enlighten me. May I inquire what business gives me the pleasure of a call from you this afternoon?"

"Small pleasure, I guess, Mr. Lawyer Hardangle—mighty small pleasure I guess you'll find it. What business brings me here? The same business that brought me here before."

"You were, Miss Underwood, when you called upon me before, scarcely in an accountable state: I gave your words no weight. But I recollect that your visit was relative to the last will and testament of one Reginald Moreland."

"Yes, Reginald Moreland. You are a good lawyer, ain't you? Memory is such a good thing for a lawyer. Now, just tell me what I said."

"Miss Underwood, I cannot allow even a woman to speak to me in so demanding a manner. I have not stored your words in my mind, and unless you propose some definite business, I have no time to waste and must beg——"

"Yes, you must beg!" broke in Rachel. "Now that is such a good one! Wit is another good thing for a lawyer. So funny in you to make out you don't know my business in one breath, and in the next say it right out. It's not very bright to tangle yourself so in the same minute. You have got a good memory, but, really, you don't seem to be very smart. Must beg: yes, of course you must. And, speaking of funny things, it's funny that dead men do tell tales sometimes, ain't it?"

The same unmoved, stony look.

"Miss Underwood, I have no time to discuss with you the correctness of old saws. Whether dead men tell tales or not, is a matter in which I have no interest whatsoever. It is growing late: perhaps we have talked long enough."

"For you, Mr. Lawyer Hardangle, no doubt; but for

me—why we haven't begun yet. Still if you do really want me to go, I will. Where? Around to your friend Mr. Inspector of Police."

"Miss Underwood, it is a matter of supreme indifference to me where you go."

"Now, Mr. Lawyer, that won't do at all. It's not gentlemanly, you know. But then, it takes a gentleman to do gentlemanly things, and a man to be a gentleman —and you really are neither."

"Woman, your impudence is insufferable!"

"Then, Mr. Lawyer, you'd better not suffer it. You have your choice about it. If you say the word, I'll go; and I'll say to your friend the Inspector: Mr. Inspector, I have just come from Lawyer Hardangle's. I inquired of him whether he thought it funny that dead men did at times tell tales, but he wouldn't tell me. So I have come to you to ask you whether it does not seem funny to you that dead men—that one dead man—that Reginald Moreland does tell tales."

"Now, Miss Underwood, you are growing more definite: you are coming to some business. If you mean that you have any information to offer, which, in any way, even remote, might tend to clear up the mystery which still hangs over the disappearance of my former friend and client, I shall be more than glad to listen to you."

"Oh, yes, more than glad, Mr. Lawyer! Then I'll begin over again. If you don't take any interest in old saws, as you call them, perhaps you would if they were changed a little. Maybe it would seem funny to you if drowned men only should tell tales."

"You are again growing indefinite."

"I'll be more definite then. Maybe it would seem odd to you, if men drowned by some one—or, more precisely, by some two—should alone tell tales."

The lawyer's gaze still held firm; but the fixed, stony look in his eyes became awfully fixed, as he said:

"Still indefinite. My time is precious."

"So is mine, Mr. Lawyer Hardangle. Indeed, I am quite sure that this present time is far more precious to me than it is to you—more precious than any time in my life before. And, though you say I'm indefinite, you really don't look it. You stare at me so sharply that I am inclined to ask you if you think I've been listening to any tales of 'floaters' down by the docks."

"It would be a very queer question, Miss Underwood."

"Yes, it would be queer—that's a fact. It's queer I thought of it, ain't it? Listen, Mr. Lawyer: Do you suppose that what might be whispered to one by floaters down at the docks, might be worth keeping silent—by money? Speaking generally now: do you suppose it?"

"I fail to get your meaning. Do you mean that my former client came to his end by drowning? That was discovered shortly after his death. You still talk very blindly."

"Dear me, Mr. Lawyer, blindly yet? How very much better your memory is than your sharpness! But I'll try once more. Don't you think that those particular tales which might be whispered to a woman, provided especially that woman was me, by a dead man, supposing that man to be one Reginald Moreland, might be worth keeping out of the public ears by paying over certain sums of money?"

"Your words contain no meaning to me, Miss Underwood."

"Mr. Lawyer Hardangle, you lie! But you shall lie no longer." ("Oh, you grinder, oh, you grinder!" ejaculated Mr. Slack, at the door, mentally rubbing his hands together.) "You shall lie no longer. You think that your secret is as hidden as the grave, but I tell you it's as open as the day. Oh, you Lawyer Hardangle, what a precious rascal you are! But I know you, oh, I know you! I knew Shadow and Bags; I knew their boat; I know how Reginald Moreland came to his end; I know how you hired your black work done; I know how you made yourself rich, and how you forged the will.

Oh, my memory's good, Mr. Lawyer, and I'm sharp besides!"

"Some one has played me false!" hoarsely cried the lawyer.

"A stern charge, Mr. Lawyer. One which it might not be well that certain ears should hear. Very personal, too—very personal. Inasmuch as Shadow and Bags make only two, and one is dead, I say you are extremely personal. And perhaps you might as well be sure that some one has been false before you say so. Ah, you rascal, you don't want me to go now, do you? Oh, no! Old saws are mighty interesting just at present, ain't they?"

Lawyer Hardangle did not immediately reply. His calculating eye picked out a certain letter in a large sign across the street and there it rested. As it lingered there, one who had known a certain individual whom the lawyer knew, and to whom he had affixed the name Joe Collins, might possibly have imagined that Joe Collins was mysteriously taking the seat which Lawyer Hardangle was occupying. At all events, when the eyes returned from this short journey to the countenance of Rachel Underwood, the face in which they were set wore a certain changed, triumphant, malevolent look—a look which, whether it was gleaming on the face of Jeremiah Hardangle or on that of Joseph Collins, foreshadowed no good to Rachel Underwood. But Rachel, being acquainted with no such person as Joseph Collins, had no other idea than that it was Lawyer Hardangle who again fixedly returned her gaze, as he said:

"Well?"

"Ill!" she rejoined. "Ill for you and well for me. I suppose you mean terms."

"Terms."

"Well, then, you got a clean half million by the thing, didn't you?"

"I have said nothing."

"But I say you did. And I say that you cheated my child—as I told you when I was here before—out of all or

part of it. Now, what terms do I ask? That just so much of that half-million as I want, I receive."

"Well?"

"Well, what do you say?"

"I take your terms."

"You do take them? You take them very easily. If you think you can get out of them you're much mistaken. You can't. Don't try to move away anywhere, for I'll split on you the minute you do; and if the police don't find you it'll be because you're not to be found."

"I had no such thought, Miss Underwood."

"Then, Mr. Hardangle" (and Mr. Slack could scarcely restrain himself from snorting aloud: "Esquire, Gentlemen of the Profession!"), "my business with you is almost finished, for the present. And it will be completely finished, when you have put into my hand five thousand good dollars."

"It is impossible for me to produce such a sum on the spot. I could give you a check, but that would not be best for either of us. Come to my house—here is my card—to-morrow night at eight o'clock and I will hand it to you in money. You of course pledge secrecy, Miss Underwood?"

"I pledge nothing!"

"You are in a position to dictate: come, and I will give you what you have asked."

"Never fear but I'll come, Mr. Lawyer. And when I want more I'll know where to get it. Good-night, Mr. Lawyer."

When Rachel returned to the waiting-room, Mr. Slack was occupying the same chair that he had been honoring when she entered. As she passed him she whispered:

"Come to-night."

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### PARTNERS AND PARTNERS.

"PAULINA," said Mr. Slack as he was rather nervously consuming his repast that night, "Paulina, have you heard nothing of Mike during the day?"

"Nothing, Silas."

"And this is the fifth night of his absence. Mike has been growing restless and uneasy for some time. I fear that Mike has struck out for himself."

"Fear so, Silas. Mike was getting in a hurry to be his own master. Restraints of home were growing disagreeable to him. Wanted to stand alone—on his own feet. Oldest boy. Never said good-bye."

"Sentiment, Paulina, sentiment. Young birds can't always remain in the home-nest. Mike was rather unruly, and, though this present nest is plentifully large for songsters that agree, it is not fitted by nature or art to be the home of contention. The boy will take care of himself: let him go. And now, Paulina, for the ten-thousandth time let me be assured of your confidence in your husband."

"Silas certainly cannot doubt it."

"Nor does he. No, Paulina, your confidence in your husband is your strong point. I ask you now because there may have been times when I have seemed a little unworthy of your trust—when there was actually not a wonderful deal for you to base your faith upon. But now, when your faith is about to be rewarded, when your husband has proved the wisdom of your confidence—now it was especially delightful to hear you repeat yourself. In short, Paulina, in short—*there has been a spill!*"

"Paulina did not doubt that Silas would accomplish his end. Hopes he has not laid himself open. Never said good-bye."

"My dear, enough. Your sentiment has turned your judgment. Laid myself open? You are not yourself. Paulina, you forget my virtue."

"Meant nothing, Silas, am sure. Silas perfectly honest. Sentiment turned her judgment."

"Let it pass, my dear—pass. This is no time for insignificant squabbles. Yes, there has been a spill—a grand, a glorious spill! The champion Heavy-weight, the immortal Grinder, Hardangle Esquire, Ladies and Gents, has been spilled, spilled, spilled! His foot is lifted from my neck, and I am free to rise. Paulina, from this hour you are more a lady than ever. You were made to shine, to sparkle and shine and gleam you shall. The poor steeds of my brain are on the home-stretch. *The race is won.* Mary and Jim, you are, between you, a great heir and heiress. But now I go. Good-night."

The rapid pace to which Mr. Slack urged the steeds of his limbs that they might be in harmony with those of his brain, caused him to appear, without any very great lapse of time, in the forlorn apartments of Rachel Underwood. Rachel was setting a pot of tea upon the coals, as he entered.

"I am come, Miss Underwood," he said. "And I find you engaged in an excellent occupation. Tea—what a wonderful beverage! Its odor is paradise and its taste is heaven."

"It's more than all that talk," rejoined Rachel, as her visitor seated himself near the stove. "I take it for my eyes. Makes them bright, you know. Sharpens my wits, too; which seeing I am going to talk to a member of the law, is a very good thing."

"Thank you, Miss Underwood—very complimentary, I'm sure," returned Mr. Slack. "Oh, yes, and thanks again: I see two cups."

"I didn't mean to keep it all to myself. It might not

hurt your intellect either. And now while it is steeping, let's come to business."

"Ah, yes, business—delightful! Grinders have their day. Speak out. I am all ear—I am a universal acoustics."

"I suppose you heard it all?" Rachel began.

"All what, Miss Underwood?"

"All the talk between your boss and me. I mean you were at the key-hole."

"Miss Underwood—excuse me—at the key-hole—astonishing!—I must object—really—my honesty compels me—Mr. Silas Slack!"

"Well, well, Mr. Honesty, try to keep cool."

"Yes, yes, cool, Miss Underwood—I am perfectly cool. But you astonish me. Of course I could not avoid occasionally overhearing a word or two which tended to confirm my belief that you were working our suspicions on the Grinder. I arrived unavoidably at the conclusion—I could not evade it. Putting two and two together I had four. I repeat—I could not avoid it. My habit of honesty compelled me. Two and two made four."

"Well, well, Mr. Honesty, I, too, repeat: try to keep cool. If you didn't hear, why, you hear now that I charged the lawyer with hiring Shadow (the man who warned you not to make a certain subject the staple of your talk, which you have done) and Bags to make way with old Moreland."

"Miss Underwood! Impossible. It cannot be! Too much respected!"

"There, there, don't be too much surprised: it's suspicious. But now you know what my suspicions were. How did I find out? I happened to go to Shadow and Bags in their den, the night before the murder. What I saw and heard there, together with what I have found out since, gave me the whole thing. Yes, I was working off my suspicions. Just tell me while I pour you some tea, what about it?"

"First, that Hardangle's guilt is almost more than even I

can believe; and, second—oh, thank you. Very nice tea—so hot, too—that, inasmuch as you swore secrecy and we are partners, I am interested—intensely interested—to hear the result in terms of cash. Delightful beverage! Yes, another if you please. To your health."

"Come, Mr. Honest Slack, do speak straight out like a man. You heard the lawyer promise me money, and you want some of it. Now, look here: I'm not going to give you any."

"Oh, ah, Miss Underwood, now really——"

"Yes, really: I'm not!"

"But honesty compels me. You did swear, and we are partners."

"Cursing or swearing, I say I'm not!"

"One moment, Miss Underwood; you're so quick and hasty. Honesty compels me: let me speak. I was not wanting any of your money. I have papers and proofs. I shall be able and capable of getting all I want for myself. Really, my lovely partner, you are very hasty indeed."

"And meant to be, Mr. Honesty. But I've got some things to say to you, and you listen. When I say I'm not going to give you any of the money the lawyer gives me, I mean I'm not unless I feel like it—unless you earn it. But I'm going to give you a chance to earn it."

"Really, now, Miss Underwood, I object. It is unjust that I should work twice for the same money. It was I, Miss Underwood, who showed you that paper—the proof of forgery. It was I who opened to you the door to wealth by which you have entered. I repeat, my charming partner, it is wrong and unjust."

"Whatever it is, Mr. Honesty, we will not talk about it now. I don't say whether I should have got it all out without you, or not. I don't say whether I've always told you the truth. But I do say that we won't talk about it now; and I do say that Shadow and I are friends. Now, Mr. Honesty, if you were afraid to attack the lawyer alone, and came to me for a little backbone, why, I

can't help it. Do you want to earn this money or don't you?"

"You forget, Miss Underwood, you swore and we are partners. Besides I can get all I want myself."

"That's just what you can't, Mr. Honest Slack. You can't get a cent. I want the lawyer to myself, and I'm going to have him; and the minute you say money to him I'll find it out, and I'll say to Shadow of a night, that a certain little man is making a certain subject the staple of his talk. You hear, Mr. Honesty?"

"Yes, yes, my charming partner, I hear."

"And from your looks, I guess you'll heed. But I don't want to be too hard on you, so I'll pay you well for easy work. Now, here it is: There is a certain little boy living in a certain bare garret with a certain poor woman. That boy is mine—his father you know as well as I. The woman—never mind who she is. Well, that boy being mine, and his father never having seen him, it's natural that I should wish him well and want to see him take a good place in the world. Now, what I want you to do is this: There's a certain man, name of Maitland, who has a school and is going to build a Hall down here in what people are pleased to call the 'slums.' He is a sort of tract-peddler and goes around in the tenements——"

"In the tenements joining hearts," interrupted Mr. Slack.

"Visiting, and getting children into his school, and giving charity. I want you to go down to his school—here's his card—and tell him about my boy, and get him to take him into his school. Now mind, I don't want you to tell him anything about who the boy is, or anything like that. Don't do that: for if you do—remember who are friends. And I want you to take this money and give it to the man and say that a kind lady who don't care to have her name mentioned, but who has taken a liking to the two, sent it to him to help take care of the child and the woman. And say that the lady will send him more at odd times. (This is to be sent by you for liberal

pay.) He will do what he can for her, which won't be much. Also tell him that they are suffering from want, and he should hasten. The name you will ask for is Mrs. Hamerton. Will you do it?"

"Well, now, Miss Underwood," replied Mr. Slack, looking very green and crestfallen, "that depends and hinges altogether upon the money there is in it. You see, you swore and we are partners, and my honesty really compels me to object to being deprived of the privilege of spilling the great and immortal Grinder."

"See here, Slack, I don't want to hear any more about your honesty compelling you. You'll really do well, in my opinion, if it don't some day compel you to take a trip to Sing Sing. I'll tell you what: if you are so anxious to spill Hardangle—by which I suppose you mean bleed him—I promise you that you shall one day get the chance. When, I don't say, and can't: it may be five years, it may be fifty. But, inasmuch as we are partners, and you did help the firm along, and, inasmuch as it will suit me to see the old rascal spilled, as you say, why, I promise you shall have the chance. In the mean time, I'll pay you well for easy work."

"Now, Miss Underwood," cried Mr. Slack, his countenance brightening, "now we are again partners! Spill him, Miss Underwood? I'll lift his foot from my neck with such a triumphant and glorious fling that he shall come down with a bang—shall see stars for several consecutive minutes. It is a long time ahead, to be sure: but the sure knowledge shall uphold and sustain me. For the present I shall live upon the Grinder, upon you, upon Mag—and upon Hope. Miss Underwood, I leave the amount to you. I agree to your stipulation."

"And you will see to the business to-morrow?"

"To-morrow, Miss Underwood."

"Then take your pencil and write the address on the back of the school-card. And remember—fourth floor."

Mr. Slack did as he was bidden, and then bade his hostess good-night.

"Good-night, Mr. Slack," returned Rachel. "To-morrow."

Leaving Rachel to her own thoughts, and to exclaim over and over again: "What a grand scheme!—if it only works and I can wait," Mr. Slack (repeating to himself: "As if I didn't know where the kid was!") pursued his way towards a respectable portion of the city, and erelong stood for the first time that month in the presence of his sister. Madame was seated reading in a low, cushioned chair near the centre of the room. On the table at her side lay a bundle of letters ready for deposit. As her brother entered she looked up from the yellow-covered literature upon which she had been engaged and returned his greeting.

"I knew it was you," she added, "from your step; or rather, from your lack of step."

"Very natural that you should," rejoined Mr. Slack. "All great men have their characteristics. Peculiarity is the penalty of ponderosity."

"And blusterosity, too, I'm thinking. Well, have you kept your eyes upon the two youngsters?"

"Yes, I've kept my eyes upon them, you Mag; and I came to tell you about the Underwood one."

"And you've come almost in the nick of time for your percentage. Had you come last evening you would have found the top letter on just such another heap of letters as that, addressed to Robert Moreland. But about the Underwood one."

"Well, about him, he's to be put to a private school and taught learning by his mother; from which you may judge that she is still good-looking."

"Good luck to him, Silas. If he rises in the world, he'll make more money. Unknown parentage. Good secret. Worth paying for."

"Oh, you Mag, you! But about that letter—what was your figure?"

"I began low—I always do. Only fifty dollars."

"Which, Mag, at my five per cent., entitles me to two-

and-one-half good dollars. At the beginning of the year, therefore, you will owe me : For watching the Underwood one, ten ; for the Ashley one, ten ; on commission, two-and-one-half. The total is easy to reckon. I shall call for said total at the proper time."

"And, as you've never failed to receive it heretofore, are quite likely to get it now—if Moreland pays up, as no doubt he will. I was reading quite an interesting story of high life when you came in, Silas. Oh, I tell you, Silas, my boy, these high ones are precious rascals. Even you wouldn't believe what a number I've got on my list."

"You are an angel, Mag—and a brick besides ! If not an angel of mercy, at least an angel of justice. How would all these poor girls get avenged without you ? The men are high, the girls are degraded ; and the law don't touch the offenders. Yes, you Mag, I repeat you are a brick of an angel. And, if you chance and happen to feather yourself a pretty decent nest by the operation, why—you can't help that, of course."

"And yet," rejoined Mag, with a sly smile, "the police and the parsons think I'm such a bad one ! Ridiculous, ain't it ? Why, as to the parsons, they spend their time in talking about some vague and shadowy punishment in some other world—which scares nobody—while I, with precious little talk, put the punishment right on here where it was committed. Ten to one, Silas, those high ones go home from their meeting-houses on Sunday with a good-natured smile on their faces ; but when, on Monday morning, they find a neat little note from me on their desks, they turn red and white by turns, and are in the humor for anything but a smile."

"Well, now, you Mag, if I haven't worn out that brick, I again repeat—you are one ! Why, I tell you what : if you only had been a preacher or a priest, you Mag, you'd have scared the whole city into kingdom-come with a bang and a rush. Dear me ! if you only could take the preachers' place on Sunday and they could take yours during the week, what a city we should have ! Hey, Maggie ? "

"I rather think we should, Silas. And when I do get my church, you shall be sexton to usher the high ones up to the front seats where I can get a good, straight whack at them. And you'll be undertaker, too. I'll stand at the head of the grave and say : 'Gone to glory :' you'll stand at the foot and say : 'The deuce he has !' Oh, Silas, to us who are in the thing—behind the scenes—there is many a comical affair to be seen. Yes, yes, at odd times I've seen the funeral processions of some of my good Christian victims, and I've smiled to myself and said : 'The deuce he has !'"

"And how about yourself, Maggie? We've all got to journey together, you know."

"Well, well, Silas, I never think of that—don't allow myself to. But if, once in a while, in spite of myself, my mind will take a cemetery turn, I comfort myself with the assurance that, as the parsons who send my respectable victims to glory, will surely send me in another direction, you or somebody can stand at the foot and say : 'The deuce she has !'"

"Or the deuce has she Hey, Maggie? But I'm on the wing to-night. Shall I post those letters ?"

"Be so good, Silas," returned Madame Guillon, re-opening her book, as her brother shuffled out. "I suppose I must go some time, hang the mean idea but, at any rate, Silas can say, 'The deuce !'"

When Mr. Slack reached his home by way of the Side Pocket, it was naturally nearing midnight. As he stumbled unsteadily into bed, he roused his sleeping wife, who raised her head and murmured dreamily :

"Paulina has perfect confidence. More a lady than ever."

"Yes," replied Mr. Slack, "you are ! Most women are pretty tolerable ladies when they're asleep. But you're not as much a lady as I had hoped. Reason : because there are two partners in the firm, and in some strange and unaccountable manner—I am the junior member !"

## CHAPTER XXII.

### JOE COLLINS.

"WELL, Mary-lady!" exclaimed the widow of the late James Humstone, "he *is* in a mood to-night. He couldn't look worse if he was on his way to murder Abraham Lincoln. There's his bell now. Butter to beans he wants his tea set back until it's as black as a black cat. That's the way it works with him: when he gets in a mood he wants his tea as black as two black cats!"

When Molly entered the dining-room in obedience to the lawyer's summons, she did not inquire what was wanting as was her custom, but instead stood near the door with her head tossed well back and a look of offended dignity upon her face.

"I'm through, Molly," remarked her employer. "I don't care for any dessert. Hand me the brandy-decanter."

"It's apple-pie," she said, "and cream to match. There ain't a better pie at this moment in all New York."

"The proof of the pudding is in the eating and not in the talking," retorted the man of law. "Just hand me the decanter and a wine-glass, and let us have no more words."

Molly procured the glass and decanter and withdrew in high dudgeon.

"Oh, Mary, Mary!" she exclaimed to her faithful companion, "what we do have to endure at the hands of our lords. But it's all our own fault—all our own fault. Dear me, if I only had your fine claws! I tell you though, lady, that you're clear and clean without excuse if you let yourself be down-trodden and over-ridden. Brandy indeed! Soothing-syrup would have been more to the point. Yes, there you go with your head crazy and ready for any-

thing, and your insides feeling like a coal of fire. Come, Mary."

Leaving the two diners to their food and reflections, Lawyer Hardangle passed upstairs to his library. Turning on the gas, he threw himself into the easy-chair beside his reading-table, stretched out his legs at full length, crossed his feet, and twining the fingers of one hand tightly with those of the other, let his head fall forward in a thinking posture.

"I'll do it!" he muttered to himself. "I must do it! God in Heaven! it might be too late even now; though, as she is after money, it isn't likely, Yes, I must do it, for to live with her hanging over my head would be worse than death; though the idea of the forgery must be all a shrewd guess arising from the notion that I supplanted her child. How in the name of the Devil did she find out the rest? And she knew it all when she came to the office the first time! What a thought! What demon helped her to find out? It utterly beats me: I can form no conjecture about it. Bags was dead and Shadow would as soon have been, as to have given it away—especially to a crazy girl. Is she the only one that knows? I must find that out first. The police don't suspect: if they had suspected I should have heard from them before I heard from her. Yes, I must do it, and I will. There'll be no peace unless I do. It's a terrible job, but there's no help for it. To-morrow night when she comes for the money, Shadow must watch her and track her—*and do the rest.*"

Mr. Hardangle sat ruminating thus for about half-an-hour, strengthening each moment his conviction that there was only one course for him to pursue, when he suddenly rose from his chair, muttering:

"Well, if I *will* do it, I'd best be at it!"

He left his book-lined library, took his hat and overcoat from the rack, and passed up into his bedroom, bolting the door behind him. He then scrupulously closed the blinds and proceeded to unlock first the closet door, and afterwards the same drawer at the left of the door,

which we have seen him open before. From this drawer he extracted a pair of rough, brown boots, a pair of worn and rusty pantaloons and a tattered coat and vest. These articles he laid upon the bed, and returning to the closet brought to light a gray flannel shirt, a dilapidated and greasy slouch hat and last of all, a wig of red hair and a spreading bush of red whiskers. Placing these, too, upon the bed, he divested himself of his customary black attire, and locked it in the drawer together with his silk hat and great-coat. This done, he tried the bolts in the trap over his head, relocked the drawer and the closet, and arrayed himself in the worn and rusty garments which he had concealed in their hiding-place as a precautionary measure shortly after the disappearance of Reginald Moreland, and which may yet be put to the use for which they were originally designed.

Having clad himself in his strange attire, Lawyer Hardangle or Joe Collins, as you will, passed to his mirror and adjusted his false hair and whiskers. When this was completed to his satisfaction, he gave himself one self-congratulatory glance, took a loaded revolver from his bureau-drawer and went downstairs, listening carefully as he went, to assure himself that Molly and her cat were at their respective duties in the basement. Then, slowly opening the street-door and finding the street deserted, he crept down the stone steps, and walked away.

The Side Pocket had its usual quota of guests upon this gusty December night. Among the number were some old, familiar faces and some comparatively new and strange. For as the front rank of pilgrims folded their tents and stole silently away to the grave, there was ever a rear line of more youthful travelers ready to fill up the number. The Side Pocket stood in the midst of a sea of nasty tenements, and the supply of pilgrims was quite inexhaustible. Among the new-comers were Mike Slack and Charley O'Brien, who were standing at the extreme end of the bar, cornered by their respective father and father-in-law.

"Now, young men," Mr. Slack was saying, "as this is your first evening here, I repeat that I hope and trust it will prove your last."

"And," replied the unruly youngster, "old man, as this is your two-thousandth evening here, I repeat that I hope and trust it will prove your last."

"There now, young man, you are both flip and impolite. Milk for babes and meat for men. Age makes all the difference——"

"Between an old swiper and a young one," interrupted Mike. "Come, old chappy, don't read us no lectures: we won't have 'em. We're on our own feet and we do our own bossing. But, I say; how did the old woman take my skipping?"

"Ill enough, unruly and ungrateful one! You are her eldest child and offspring; and remembering this altogether unforeseen and unhappy circumstance, she took it ill, I repeat, that you should leave the home-nest where you were born and reared, without so much as a good-bye."

"Well, well, chirk her up when she's down in the eating-organ, old man. Tell her that you saw me alive and kicking; that I pick up odd jobs during the day, and sleep with neatness and dispatch for a dime. All which you will relate to her if you feel so inclined, and if you don't, you won't."

"And I most emphatically do not!" rejoined Mr. Slack. "I shall freshen no unpleasant memories and recall no disagreeable associations. I trust, young gentlemen, that you indulge in nothing but soft drinks?"

"Soft your grandmother!" contemptuously exclaimed both young gentlemen simultaneously.

"What! so soon fallen?"

"Come, come, governor!" cried Mike, "say what it will be: Straight, punch or cock-tail? Gin, beer or ale? Give us a card."

"Well, now, young men, really you are too immature to be at it already. But, as you are your own bosses and

will do it, why there is no man living whom I should sooner have you drink with than your father. A glass of ale, my sons. To both of your healths, my children."

The ale having been drawn and gulped, Mike and Charley each lighted a brown clay pipe, and the three joined the circle about the stove. The conversation seemed to be turning upon the relative merits of hand and head.

"Now," said the Kid, "hand and head. They both gits the same start-off, and they both winds up sim'lar. Theer ain't no sich oncommon difference atween the words, as people are foriver tryin' to make out. Wan feller puts his head onto a buke or a paper, and, by thunder, he must live on the Av'nue and have six or siven horses: I puts my two hands onto a shovel or a hoe, and sweats away all day, and I'm durned if I haint unasy to roide down to the dumps along of the garbage what the head-fellerler laves out on his side-walk."

"Right you are," joined in Mr. Slack. "Theyare grinders, and it's their delight to grind. But I always assert and declare that our day is coming. Grinders are grinders, but spills are spills! Nevertheless, I must say—honesty compels me—that head-work is of right better paid than hand-labor."

"Roight nawthin'!" rejoined the Kid. "I knows the proper rule fur payin'. I says: so much sweat, so much cash; no sweat, no cash."

As Mike finished this exposition of his economic views, the door of the Pocket swung slowly open, and an individual who was a complete stranger to them all—some fresh pilgrim, perhaps—entered the saloon. The stranger's face was enveloped in a mass of bushy red whiskers; he was dressed in a rusty-brown suit of clothes; and he had a greasy slouch hat drawn well down over his eyes. He gave no heed to the debaters about the stove until he had first stepped to the bar and indicated to Dan, the tender, by signs, that he wanted brandy. Then he faced about as he slowly sipped the liquor, and scrutinized the company.

"Now as to your rule in the matter of remuneration," Mr. Slack went on, when the eyes of the company had returned from the new-comer, "I can agree with it on one consideration alone. And that consideration is that there may be two kinds of sweat. For I assert that two such perspirations exist. There is one perspiration of the brow and another of the brain : there is one sweat of the muscle and another of the mind. The only difference between the two is, that the one stripes the countenance with the streaks of grimy toil ; the other fills the mind's eye with moisture. But, even so, your rule is at fault, for where one man can labor with his brain, twenty men can toil only with their brawn. The man of head can become the man of hand : the man of hand cannot become the man of head. I can say this, for I have had experience—I say it humbly—no little experience in head-work ; and I declare that head-work is much rarer than hand-work. And again : if it were not for the head there would be very little use for the hand. I will illustrate. Suppose for example that there were no lawyers—I speak humbly—to make the law against murder : where would be the hangman's job? Or suppose there were no lawyers —again humbly—to make laws against thieving and other crimes : where would the police find a job?"

"And," put in Billy, "suppose as there was nobody to invent gas : where would your tongue find a job?"

At this juncture the conversation was interrupted by the odd movements of the silent stranger. He left his stand at the bar, and approaching Shadow as he was sitting morosely puffing away at his pipe, tapped him upon the shoulder and made signs that he should follow him.

"What the deuce is wrong with yer?" demanded the felon, as the whiskered stranger continued his beckonings. "Can't yer speak out?"

The stranger's face assumed a blank and puzzled look. Thrusting his fingers into his ears, and striking his hand upon his mouth, he shook his head in a helpless, explanatory

manner, which plainly said that he was without hearing or speech.

"Theer be summat difference atween him and Apartment," slyly suggested the Kid.

"And durned if I don't perfer his sasiety!" ejaculated Shadow. "But, hold on, old cove, and I'll be with yer, if only to find out what in thunder yer want with yer hanged gymnastics. Mebbe a little night air'll do your voice good."

Leaving Mr. Slack and his friends to finish their discussion at the Pocket, the rusty-coated stranger conducted Shadow in silence to The Toot, another saloon about a dozen blocks further up-town and one block nearer the East River. Here they drank together at the stranger's expense, and then sat down in an unoccupied corner of the room.

"Your name's Shadow," said the stranger in a muffled voice.

"The deuce yer say!" returned Shadow. "Yer're a forge, ain't yer? 'Lowin' as yer couldn't talk!"

"Yes, it was all put on—I can talk as well as the next fool. The dumbness was put on and other things to match. Don't you remember my voice?"

"Yer voice? Well, now, yer a hair-pin, ain't yer? Who the devil are yer, anyhow? 'Pears as I do seem to twig yer clack: but I can't just seem to say whose it is."

"What would you say to its being one Hardangle's!"

"Durn you! Hardangle! That's the caper. Durn you—and a-lookin' this here sort o' way. And I say what might yer want of me? It hain't no sort o' use fur yer to try to git me into no more scrapes. I won't go in."

"That's because you were suspected of the other, I suppose. Or was it because Bags—let us talk low—lost his life in it?"

"It's because I won't go in, I say!"

"But there's money in what I've got to tell you. You're not tired of money, are you?"

"Look here, lawyer; I say it ain't no use. I won't go in!"

"Not if I should say that unless you do go in we may both be strung up together for the other? What if I should say that?"

"What d'yer say?"

"That there is one that knows all about the other thing."

"The devil yer do! How d'yer know there is?"

"She came to me and told me the whole affair."

"Blue blazes! Did she, though? What did she look like?"

"She was a young, good-looking woman with dark eyes and hair——"

"That's the gal!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean as I've had blasted bad luck ever since I first saw yer, and I wish yer'd been in Hell afore yer come a-botherin' of me. What do I mean? I mean that gal come to me, too."

"To you! What are you talking about? And you never told me about it?"

"I didn't, 'cause it warn't no use. I hain't in no danger, I'm thinkin'. Did the hussy tell her name?"

"Rachel Underwood."

"Exact. Mebbe yer don't jest know what my name is?"

"You're name? You can't mean——"

"Yes, I kin mean. My name's Underwood."

"What, Shadow, what! Your daughter?"

"The same sharp indiwidual."

"Speak out, man! I must know all about this. Where under Heaven did she find out?"

"Say I don't know then."

"You don't know?"

"That's my drift."

"You're cool enough about it. She promised not to give you away, I suppose."

"Yer supposes about the truth."

"Then, if you're telling what's so, she has been fooling either you or me. She came to me for pay to keep the thing quiet, and threatened to expose me unless I gave her money."

"Did she bleed yer, Mr. Lawyer? Perty darter! Joy of my heart. So sharp, too. Worth any number of cops to hunt down a scent. Did she bleed yer, though? Perty darter!"

"Blast your insolence, you villain! Don't try chaffing me. Did you hear what I said? She knows I wouldn't hang alone: she knows to give me up would be to give you up. And yet she threatened to expose me. Do you hear that?"

"I twig, Mr. Lawyer. I reckon as it war yer she war gamin', and not her father. Did yer come down handsome?"

"I didn't give her a cent. I told her to come to my house to-morrow might for what she wanted. My scheme was to have you shadow her and do another little job; and I say you're a fool if you don't. You think she was gaming me, and that she wouldn't have gone to the authorities if I had refused her. Well and good. I shall take the same ground. I sha'n't give her a farthing. Now, do you feel safe?"

"Don't bluff, lawyer. I know yer'll come down. Yer're far too keen to mean that. Yer wouldn't run the risk fur no end of cash. Yer ain't the kind to trust yer neck to her affect'on fur her dad. Besides, what's more, she ain't the only one as knows the hull biz."

"Great God! Speak out, I say! I meant to ask that. Who knows it?"

"Say I don't know. She says there's others as she is the only one as kin keep back. Do her, and we're cooked 'uns."

"Do you believe her? Don't you know anything about it?"

"I believe her too much to croak her, leastwise; and I

don't know nuthin' about it. I reckon as she's got more nor one dark yarn in her head as would keep back a chap or two."

"This is a fearful mess, a fearful mess!" exclaimed the lawyer under his breath. "If you're not in the thing yourself for gain (which from your manner I fancy you're not), I say it is fearful. Couldn't we get her somewhere—into your den, say—and scare her into giving up the names at the point of the revolver (if she really has them)?"

"Skeer her? No! It ain't in her. I tried it on myself. She knows we wouldn't dare touch her. I tell yer, Mr. Lawyer, as fur yer, yer've got to pay; and as fur me, I'm all right."

Lawyer Hardangle rose.

"I must think this over," he said. "Meanwhile, remember: One caught, two caught: one hung, two hung. Good-night."

"The same to yerself fur the hull of it."

In the course of an hour, Joe Collins had vanished somewhere and Jeremiah Hardangle was pacing his library floor. Shadow, on his part, retained his identity and betook himself to the apartments of his daughter, whither he arrived shortly after Mr. Slack's departure, his faith in her promised protection a good deal disturbed by the lawyer's account of her threats. Rachel, however, quickly reassured him.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### MAMMY'S FEELINGS ARE PROPHECIES.

As Paulina Slack bade her husband good-bye the next morning, there was no trace of low spirits in her tone. She had expected nothing and had not been disappointed by her husband's words of the night before. The observation of this fact elicited from her beloved this tender parting remark :

"Paulina, you are the very woman after my own heart ; and, though you will not comprehend it, I will distinguish you by remarking that it makes no essential difference to a clam whether the weather be wet or dry."

The day in Mr. Hardangle's office proved itself fully as dry as usual to the author of the foregoing sentiment. However, having obtained permission to quit the scene of his daily calling an hour or two earlier than was his wont, he found the exceeding dryness of the day more bearable by reason of its brevity. Leaving the office he wended his way in the direction indicated by the card which his senior partner had given him, and erelong arrived at his destination. Entering a schoolroom fitted with seats for about thirty children, he stood face to face with the sole occupant of the room—the teacher at his desk—and removing his hat, inquired after the man he sought. Following the directions he received he knocked at the office door in the rear of the room, which was opened to him by a sweet-faced little girl, who first inquired his name, and then called to a man busily writing at the other end of the office :

"Brother Phil, Mr. Slack would like to see you."

"Tell him to come right in, Rose," answered Philip

Maitland, without looking up from his writing. "I will talk with him in one moment."

Mr. Slack accordingly entered, and taking a seat upon the sofa which stood near the door, awaited Philip's disengagement. While he waited, Rose opened a conversation with him.

"I think it's pretty cold out of doors, don't you?" she said.

"Rather cold and chilly," replied Mr. Slack.

"But we—that is Phil, I mean—keeps it good and warm all about here. Were you ever here before?"

"I never had that privilege, Miss. My business ties me closely down."

"I think it's very nice, don't you? You came through the school where they teach them; and now you're in the office; and out there is the reading-room through the glass. You see they can play billiards and ten-pins and all sorts of games. Don't you think it's nice, too?"

"It seems very agreeable: no doubt it is."

"If you've never been here before, perhaps you'll like it well enough to come again when you get time. I'm wondering what your business is."

"I am of the legal profession, Miss. I am of the bar."

"Oh, dear! the bar? Then I see why you're so busy. Brother Phil says there are so many saloons around here! I've never been here but once before. I hope you never sell beer to little boys, sir!"

"Oh, dear me, Miss, you're much mistaken. I am not of the saloon bar, but of the legal bar. They are closely related, however. For the saloon bar makes the laws which the legal bar has to deal with. Oh no, Miss. There are several kinds of bars. I am a lawyer—an attorney—and, if I did keep a saloon, I might one day be a Justice."

"Oh, dear, I'm sure I don't understand half you say, sir, but I am so glad you don't sell it to little boys and their brothers and papas. Brother Phil does have such trouble with the saloons! That's just the reason he has

all these games here, so that they can come and have a good time, and not go to the saloons and get drunk and swear and fight. Oh, dear me! I don't see why men will keep saloons; do you?"

"Well now, Miss, that is a question! Honesty compels me to say that I do see. It's because there's money in it. But men should be moderate, and never allow themselves to become intoxicated. Why, only last night it was my painful duty to beseech two youths—promising youths—to let the cursed stuff alone. And even then I have every reason to fear that they partook after all. Indeed, I am perfectly confident they did."

Little Rose's exclamation of approbation was interrupted by her brother's wheeling about upon his chair and coming over to shake hands with his visitor.

"Why, Mr. Slack, is it you? I was so busy I really did not heed the name Rose gave me. You are off duty earlier than usual this afternoon. How are your wife and family? And how is the one I married?"

"To answer all your inquiries simultaneously," rejoined Mr. Slack, "I will say—beautifully, sir. That term covers both the health of my offspring and the outward appearance of my wife. There have been some changes—some vicissitudes—but take it all in all, I say beautifully."

"I am glad to hear it, Mr. Slack, glad to hear it. And now what can I do for you?"

"That, sir, is the point. I have come here to represent another—a lady, a client of Mr. Hardangle. She does not wish her name revealed: modesty seeks incognito. Said lady handed me this sum of money—which she will renew at odd times—to make over to you, that you might use it in behalf of a certain poor boy and her who supports him. You will find the address upon the back of this, your own card. It was the wish of aforesaid lady that the boy should be educated at your school. As to aiding and helping the woman, you were to exercise your own judgment and discretion after seeing and observing her for yourself. And now, Mr. Maitland,—I have the honor—

I may ask you when you can attend to the matter. I was informed by my principal in this case, that they were suffering from want and privation, and that they should be attended to with dispatch."

"Oh, the poor things!" broke out little Rose, who had been an attentive listener to Mr. Slack's narrative. "I'm sure you'll go right away, won't you, Phil dear?"

"Well now, little mouse," replied Philip, "if you want me to, I guess I must."

"And mayn't I go with you? I should like to go so much! You know I want to be a little missionary too, though I'm sorry sister Madge don't like me to be. Madge and I are so very different. May I go, Phil?"

"Yes, midget, if you want to; and we can go directly home from there. I will just step in and ask Mr. Sidgwick to wait until Peter comes in. Will you accompany us, Mr. Slack?"

"I have the honor, Mr. Maitland. I should be gratified to do so. I have a great sympathy for the poor and down-trodden, having at odd times been badly ground myself."

The three set out directly and hurried along through the wintry air at a rate too rapid to allow much conversation, and one which brought them without great lapse of time to the grimy tenement upon whose top floor mammy and Joe boy loved and labored. Philip consulted his card.

"This is the number," he said.

"The fourth and topmost story," said Mr. Slack. "Let us remember that in such cases the fewer questions asked the better."

"I shall not forget it, Mr. Slack. I have too often seen one false step put back one's work for years. But I have not thought to inquire the woman's name."

"Name of Hamerton. Now we enter and ascend."

"Oh, Phil!" cried little Rose, as they passed into the hall as dark as midnight save for the opened door, "I'm almost afraid. And what a bad smell there is!"

Philip smiled sadly. Vile odors were nothing new to him.

"I'll keep the door open for you, mousey," he said. "It will be lighter as you go up. There, now wait for me, and Mr. Slack will lead the way. Keep hold of the rail and turn when it turns."

The dismal journey to the top landing safely accomplished, Mr. Slack knocked at the first door at hand (knowing full well that it was the right one) and a hollow voice from within called out:

"Come in."

Mr. Slack slowly opened the door and inquired, while his two companions stood just behind him:

"Is this Mrs. Hamerton, and her son?"

Again the husky voice revealed its owner's fatal disease.

"My name is Hamerton and this is Joe boy. What do you want?"

"I give place to you, Mr. Maitland. Mrs. Hamerton this is Mr. Maitland and his little sister, Miss Rose. He will inform you of his errand."

Philip, thus introduced, stepped forward into the room, followed timidly by Rose.

"This is Mrs. Hamerton?" he kindly inquired—so kindly that it seemed to surprise the woman, as something new and strange might have done.

"That's the name I rightly goes by," Mrs. Hamerton, replied, not for a moment forsaking the sewing upon which she was busily engaged, "but Joe boy calls me mammy. Joe boy, give over the stitching, and let the gentleman have your chair. It isn't a extra nice one, sir, and we haven't over many of them here—everythink is that high! I'd give you my own, sir, but I can't rightly stitch, standing; and I mustn't give it over. Besides, I feel that tired to stand long."

"You are working very hard, my woman," said Philip, seating himself. "You scarcely seem fit for it."

"We doesn't complain, sir," returned mammy, nervously, casting a quick glance at her visitor's face, as if to ascertain

whether he had any intentions of removing her to the hospital or the alms-house. "Joe and me never complains. We does have to work a bit hard and a bit long, but we never complains—never! (You'll excuse my coughing, sir, I can't help it.) We keeps ourselves from starving and from freezing—and we never, never complains!"

Philip Maitland well knew the anxious motive which had dictated this repeated denial of complaint. Unlike some very good and well-meaning gentlemen, he had discovered that pride and independence of spirit can exist on the fourth floor of a foul tenement, even if that floor contains nothing but chilly attics.

"Mrs. Hamerton," he said, "I can easily believe you. People that work as you are working don't find time to complain. Your cough is very bad, my poor woman."

"A bit, sir. It do rack me at times; but I never complains of it, do I, Joe boy?"

"That you doesn't, mammy," answered the boy warmly. "It ain't you to whimper."

"You are very fond of your boy," continued Philip, his heart touched by the love and devotion which the pair exhibited. "I'm sure I don't wonder at it. Joe is a fine fellow, and he'll make a fine man."

"I'm wery obliged to you, sir, for saying it," responded mammy, her face brightening. "Yes, sir, that he will! A dear, good (excuse this hack, sir), a dear, good one is Joe. He's my only comfort now. We isn't much, sir, but I tells him and he believes it, that if he's the one he ought to be, he'll come to somethink good."

"And what you tell him is as true as true can be, Mrs. Hamerton. It's true at this moment, and I am here to say it's true. I have a school not very far from here, and a good, kind lady told me about him, and gave me money to dress him up and take him to my school, and make a fine, good man of him. Yes, it's perfectly true."

The intense delight of mammy's heart may be best judged by the fact that she threw her sewing upon her lap

and stuck her needle into it. When mammy forgot to stitch, something very unusual had happened.

"Bless you, sir!" she cried. "Bless you, sir, and her, too! If she was here, I'd rightly fall down on my knees and worship her. Joe boy, does you hear what the gentleman says? A fine, good man, Joey. Oh, I did feel it, I did feel it! I'm so wery obliged to you, sir. Thank the kind gentleman, Joe, and tell him how rightly happy you are!"

To mammy's great surprise and mortification, Joe did not speak a word nor offer to express the slightest gratitude to the stranger who had brought him such wonderful news.

"Why, Joe boy!" she exclaimed, "why don't you thank the good gentleman? Didn't you hear what he said? A fine, good man, Joe."

"Mammy," replied the boy, very slowly and very thoughtfully for one so young, "mammy, I heard as what the gentleman said. And I am a-thinking as how your feels was right, and how it was money. But—but—"and the little face grew yet more sober and a shade fell across the fine, dark eyes, "it ain't money in such a way as will let me make you stop stitching so; and you can't take a ride in the horse-cars of a Saturday afternoon; and I'm afeared as how it's not going to do you no good at all. And if it don't, I ain't rightly going to take it."

"Bless you!" broke out the woman, the tears running down her withered and sunken cheeks, "bless you! You ain't a-going to be a fine, good man unless it does me good, too. Oh, boy, boy, what a Joe boy you are!"

"You needn't feel bad about that, my fine little fellow," put in Philip. "The same lady also gave me money to get your dear mammy into a better place than this."

"Did she, though!" cried little Joe, his face beaming with delight. "Then I'll feel awful good to you both, sir. Well, I never! Mammy what feels you does have! And it's your time to hear now. Didn't you hear what the gentleman said? What makes you so sober-like?"

"Sober, Joe boy? Sober? Well, I allow as how I was a-thinking as how I had never took no charity—oh, that do rack me!—how I never had took none before, Joe boy, and how, Joe boy, I didn't rightly want, Joe boy, to take none now. I hope as how you won't think I'm proud and high-stepping, sir, and I'm rightly obliged to you. And there's other reasons why I can't leave here—oh, that *does* rack me! There's Willie—him as were my son, sir—and there's Morris—my husband—and there's the other one as were my daughter. They might come back here—and I loves them yet—and wouldn't find me. No, sir, I rightly couldn't take the money."

"Oh, mammy!" exclaimed the child, "then I won't neither."

"Yes, you will, boy—it's all different with you. If some lady wants to make a fine good man out of you, it's all right. Because you will grow up to pay her back by being a fine man and showing her all the good she has done. Why, Joe boy, what's all my feels been about if not for this? Yes, you must, boy; it's all different and right with you. You're young and the world is afore you."

"I can't take none," persisted the child. "Everything is so high, and rent is highest as all, and I must stay and help mammy stitch."

Tears stood in Philip Maitland's eyes, as he looked into the prematurely old face of Joe boy, and he repeated to himself: "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

"My little fellow," he said, "I am very glad to see you cling to your mother so. But don't you see that she won't have you to pay for any longer, and so you'll help her as much by going? And then when you grow older you can make money enough for both."

So Philip spoke, but he saw on mammy's face how well she knew that long, long before her Joe had grown into a man, she would have lain down in the dark, narrow home where there would be no danger of winter draughts and no need of moving. His words, however, seemed quite

to satisfy the sweet honor of the child and he made no further objections.

"My dear Mrs. Hamerton," Philip continued, "your cough is very distressing: I will send you a physician."

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed the woman, "doctors are high, too. I'm afeared as I couldn't pay him along of all the other high thinks."

"Don't mention pay, Mrs. Hamerton. The pay is all seen to."

"No, sir, no! Don't think as I'm proud, and I'm rightly obliged to you; but I'd rather not."

Philip, knowing that mammy was taking the last steps towards a consumptive's grave, untwined his arm from little Rose, and whispered in her ear:

"You're very bad, my woman: you ought, for Joe boy."

"Oh, sir! I wonder if I am that bad! Yes, sir; anythink—even that—for Joe boy."

And so, with a God bless you and a promise to return on the morrow to clothe Joe boy and start him at the school, Philip Maitland took his leave, Rose clinging tightly to his hand, and Mr. Slack bringing up the rear. At the street-door their ways parted. They had been separated but a moment, when Rachel Underwood issued from the same door, and followed after Mr. Slack.

"Why!" exclaimed that individual as Rachel overtook him, "are you here, Miss Underwood?"

"Seems I am," replied Rachel. "And I was there, too. You've done your part all right: come to-morrow night and get your pay."

As they reached a crossing, Rachel darted off in her peculiar, gliding way, allowing her surprised junior no time for his inevitable flow of words, and saying to herself:

"The thing is well afoot. Oh, what a grand scheme! Pink and white, you shall be all white! Rose Maitland to Joe Hamerton: how does that sound? The scourge is being woven—*and I will wait!*"

"A queer one!" muttered Mr. Slack as he pursued his homeward way, "and knowing as queer. She was there too, was she, and I never dreaming it. What does she mean anyway? Does she love the child? Or is she raising him to raise herself?—or what? Maitland didn't recognize the old woman's voice. No wonder the way it sounds. Holloa! here's Applegate's; I better hustle along before he sends a cop after me to get that last month's bill."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### MOLLIE HUMSTONE'S EYES DO NOT DECEIVE HER.

When Lawyer Hardangle returned to his home the evening after his conversation with Shadow, he brought with him a large, tin cash-box, which he immediately bore to his bedroom and secured in his ever-locked closet.

"These are uncertain days," he muttered as he turned away. "Cash is the only safe commodity. Outlaws can't conveniently keep bank-accounts. Before many days, Moll, my girl, the bulk of your snug little fortune will be under the same roof with you."

The lawyer partook of his dinner in gloomy silence, and was mechanically looking over his evening paper in the library, when the basement-bell rang. The doughty housekeeper answered the jingling summons. She bestowed a peering glance upon the applicant for admission, and recognizing the features of the girl with the baby, exclaimed :

"What ! You ! What brings you to me? How did you know I lived here? Unless my eyes very much deceive me, you are the one who thought I could have two. Are you really and truly a bad one?"

To all these interrogatories Rachel Underwood deigned no further reply than to say with a scornful toss of her head :

"Mind your own business, you old prude ! I'd have gone to the upper door if I'd known you worked here—with your sniffs and your snorts. I want to see your boss : where is he?"

Mrs. Humstone's natural bent urged her to enter a vigorous protest against the application of such an impudent designation to herself, and of a term implying so

much superiority to her future husband. But a quick instinct of self-interest prevailed. Molly's bosom had lately been lacerated by a most grievous bereavement, and Rachel offered a possible clue towards the retrieving of that bereavement. In fine, Mary, the old and well-beloved gray, had mysteriously been parted from her foster-mother; and as Molly's mind was by no means free from the suspicion that the man with the monkey, who had taken such a liking to the cat, could shed light upon her disappearance, if only his abiding-place were discovered, she naturally felt a desire to conciliate the good favor of the young woman before her. For, as will be remembered, the widow had firmly determined in her own mind that the individual with the monkey and the girl with the baby were offshoots of the same parent stalk. Self-interest, therefore, gaining the mastery, she quietly observed:

"I hope you won't take my questions too hard, Miss. They sort of popped out of my mouth at seeing you so suddenly. Come in: I want to have a little talk with you. Now, sit down and be easy a minute, and I'll go up to Mr. Hardangle directly. I'm sure you remember the day I first saw you, as well as I do. Well, after you left me that afternoon I came across your brother, and we had some little words together. Now, Miss, what I wanted to say is: Could you tell me where he lives? I sha'n't do him no harm, and it might do me a power of good. Now just could you tell—and would you?"

"No, I couldn't just tell," returned Rachel shortly, "and I wouldn't just take the trouble if I could. So let's have done with your talk, or the first thing I know you'll be asking me about my baby again, and she's dead. I want to see the lawyer and I want to see him now."

"Miss," said Molly, the while congratulating herself upon her craftiness, "Miss, would you like a piece of one of my mince pies?"

"Oh, heavens!" exclaimed Rachel. "Do you take me for a child or a fool? I say I want to see the lawyer

right away, and if you don't help me, I'll run through the house till I do."

"My pies are no food for children, I'd have you to know, you ill-bred thing!" rejoined Molly tartly. "I'm thinking that Mr. Hardangle has no time to waste in listening to such a pert tongue as you carry in your head. Give me your name."

To the housekeeper's chagrin, Mr. Hardangle desired the young woman's attendance.

"Miss Underwood," he said, as Rachel entered, "sit down."

Rachel having taken the chair indicated, the two sat facing one another fixedly in silence. Rachel was the first to break the spell.

"Well," she said, "I'm waiting."

Before the lawyer spoke, he took a loaded revolver from the drawer at his hand, cocked it and laid it upon the table. Then, lifting his eyes to those of his companion, he said:

"You see it, Miss Underwood. Before we begin, let's name it. What do you think would be a good name?"

"A Fool's Trick!" cried Rachel disdainfully. "See here, man, that's too silly. It's even sillier than mince pies. I don't scare worth a cent, and never did. Put the pop-gun back in the drawer. I didn't come here for such fooling, nor yet for a long spout. I gave you terms and you took them: all that's left is for you to hand over the cash."

"Don't you scare, Miss? Maybe not; but all the bravado in the world can't save you unless I've a mind it shall. So you would call it 'A Fool's Trick.' I call it 'The Last Argument.' In other words, Miss, I'm a desperate man at times, and can, as you've found out in some devilish way or other, do desperate things. So much for that: now to our business. You made a demand upon me for certain moneys: I promised said moneys. I now revoke that promise, and refuse to let you have so much as a cent."

"Then, sir, I start this minute for our friend the Inspector. You have your choice, Mr. Lawyer Hardangle."

"I do have my choice this time!" retorted the man of law. "Before you go to the police you're so fond of talking about, you'd better hunt up your lovely parent and learn from him what a certain red-whiskered lawyer said to him last night. Oh, you come of precious good stock, Miss! If you do, you'll discover that the minute Lawyer Hardangle is exposed, at that precise minute murderer Shadow goes the same road."

"You scheming rascal!" cried Rachel. "Do you think I wasn't prepared for all this? Do you think Shadow didn't come to me last night and tell me all? Don't I know you wouldn't take the risk of my not telling for Shadow's sake? Besides, Mr. Lawyer, did Shadow forge a will? Has anybody got any papers which prove that he forged any wills? Mr. Lawyer, you're a rascal and a fool!"

"Am I a fool in your dear estimation? Then, lest I remain one, I will say that I knew he'd been to you the minute I saw you were not surprised at my seeming change of mind. I merely meant to try you.

"You say, Miss Underwood, that you would immediately apply to the authorities: I know you would not. What advantage would accrue to you from such a step? Your game would be up the moment you opened your mouth. Then where is all our expected booty? Alas! you are growing older every day: you cannot expect your good looks to bring you in a livelihood much longer——"

"Shut up, I say!"

—"Then where is our bread and butter to come from? No, you are too shrewd for such a course. Let us then make some more reasonable arrangement. I will do this much: for your skill or luck in discovering what you have, I agree to support you the rest of your life, be it longer or shorter. I will give you such a sum as will support you in ease, good looks or dried looks."

"I tell you to stop!" cried Rachel. "I'll hear no more such stuff. I'll have as much of that half-million as I like, or I'll have none—nor you either. It's not only money I want: it's your money. If money was all, I could get any amount without troubling you. I've far richer ones than you to call on."

"You are not lying now," said the man of law, "however much you have been lying heretofore. Yes, you have the one who is the father of your child. Oh, you see I know him well enough, Miss Underwood. Oh, yes; I had forgotten about him."

"You don't know him at all, liar!"

"Just as you say, Miss; but before you make up your mind so firmly you might run up to your old friend the mother of the home, and ask her whether she ever had a call from me."

"You sneak! Madame Guillon wouldn't tell you anything if you did."

"Madame Guillon is capable of a good many things. It seems that she has told me about one of her cases. Yes, yes, I know Robert Moreland well, Miss Underwood—the more shame to you. You didn't suppose the lady was in that business because she was a saint, did you?"

"I tell you," cried Rachel, rising to her feet, "I don't care if you do know him! It's well for you he don't know you. Will you give me that money or won't you? Oh, don't point your pistol at me! Shoot me if you want; and, if your servant don't give you away in the morning, you'll fall into hands which I alone know how to restrain—hands through which I've found out what I have. Oh, shoot away, Mr. Murderer, if you like the looks of the future!"

"I had no idea of shooting," replied the man of law, coolly laying aside the weapon. "I only wanted to see if you'd say what you have, though, of course, there's no telling whether it's to be believed or not. Yes, I'll give you the money, since there's nothing to be got out of you by keeping you longer."

So saying, the man of law left the room, and when he returned he brought with him a small tin box which he had taken from his cash-box upstairs. This he placed in Rachel's hands.

"There is the sum, Miss Underwood. All's fair in war, and you have beaten me. We will talk no longer. Good-night."

Rachel tucked the treasure triumphantly under her shawl, and Lawyer Hardangle showed her to the door, a look of malice and revenge lividly gleaming from his dark face.

"Joe Collins," he muttered, as he returned to the library, "you must ever be on the watch from this hour. There's no telling what can happen now. There may be, there must be, others in it, and if she dies, look out. I'll slip this little fellow into my pocket and keep it there so they sha'n't take me alive."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### EVERYTHINK IS THAT HIGH FOR MAMMY.

Joe boy had not long been established in Philip Maitland's schoolroom under the care of Mr. Sidgwick, when his love and fidelity determined his manly little head to forego for a time his childish studies, and spend his whole time with the only mother he knew. For mammy was rapidly preparing "to move." The kind physician had shaken his head and said it was of no use. Sorrow and toil and privation had done their work well, as they are ever doing it, quite unheeded by us who have our own little toils and sorrows to engross us. Mammy's needle had sewed its last seam—taken its last stitch. She would never uncomplainingly work "a bit hard and a bit long" any more. Her tireless resolution could carry her no further, and she who had been "that tired to stand long," was too tired to sit long, and would not now have to lie long in her bed. She was made as comfortable as her surroundings would permit, and she well repaid all efforts in her behalf by her quiet smile of gratitude, which mutely said:

"I'm wery obliged to you."

It was mournful indeed to see how rapidly mammy sank from the day she took to her bed. Having subsisted form any months almost wholly upon will-power, it was not surprising that the moment she was compelled to give up she collapsed utterly. Joe boy scarcely left her side; and though he was so young, the sinking woman could have had no more efficient or tender nurse. But his stout heart which had not flinched before cold and want, did quail before the prospect of being left alone—utterly without known kin in the wide world. Joe boy was but

young; and though he had spent his days in the very kingdom of death, death was mysterious and awful to him. One afternoon, as he was sitting upon the bed, mammy weakly stretched out her thin hand—deformed by hard and ceaseless stitching, and placed it upon his.

"Joe boy," she said, "I'm glad as how it came afore I had to go. I'll die easier for knowing as you are to be a fine and a good one."

"Oh, mammy!" exclaimed the little fellow, the tears streaming down his cheeks, "don't talk so! You mustn't go, mammy!"

"Poor Joey, poor Joey, you knows as how I'd like to stay by you; but I can't, Joe boy, can't. And I'm going wery soon now—wery soon. I'm played, Joey, played—though I never complained."

"Oh, don't! mammy, don't! I doesn't want to be a fine one unless as how I can help you and move you to somewhere better."

"Yes, yes, Joey, you must be a fine one, and you will—I feels it. But now, Joe boy, I must tell you somethink, so if I should go sudden-like, it would be all right. In the straw under me there's money to bury me decent—not like a pauper in a box. Did you hear, boy? I talks that low-like, and I seems to be that played."

"Yes, mammy, I hears. But don't talk no more now: it rightly plays you too much."

"A little more, Joey—about them as you've never seen. I feel that worn and played that I'm afeard—I'll go to-day. So tell them—if you sees them—that I loved them yet, Joe boy, loved them yet." Mammy paused a moment to rest before continuing. "And about him as wronged her as we doesn't name—if you ever does find him—tell him—yes, tell him—as I forgave him, too. And don't you raise your hand agin him, Joey—for he'll be punished for it—and you wouldn't be fine and good—if you was—to touch—him."

Mammy, quite exhausted, closed her eyes and lay white and motionless upon her pillow. While she lay

thus in silence, the door softly opened and Philip Maitland entered the room. He had seen mammy the morning of the preceding day, and, though he was accustomed to scenes of death, and knew that she must go soon, he was much shocked, as he softly approached the bed, to see how terribly she had failed. As he sympathetically placed his hand upon Joe boy's head, mammy opened her eyes and recognized him.

"I'm wery obliged to you, sir," she said with a faint smile.

"Don't speak of me, my poor woman," replied Philip, taking a seat upon the bed. "You are very weak, aren't you?"

"A bit, sir; but I doesn't complain. Yes, sir, I'm almost done. The day and me will go together, I'm thinking. Poor Joe boy! don't take on so. Almost done, sir."

"I fear so, my woman: there's no use in hiding it from you. You're very bad. But we must all die some time. You're not afraid to go?"

"A bit, sir. Not as I've ever been a coward, or anything like that. But it's new, is dying. And I fear as I've been none too good, sir, and graves are that cold and dark and strange."

"Yes, yes, Mrs. Hamerton, but you'll never know anything about a grave. Shall I tell you how you needn't be afraid to die?"

"If you would, sir. And quick; because I'm that played."

"Have you ever heard of God, my woman?"

"A bit, sir. One as we doesn't name used to sing about Him when she was in the school. But I've most forgot all I ever did know about Him; I've lived in a poor sort of a place and He ain't much set by here. May be He don't come into such sort of places—who'd blame Him? He be a great way off, I'm thinking; and yet now as I'm going somehow it's Him as I'm afeard of."

"Now, my dear woman," quickly replied Philip with

an assuring smile, "if that is your trouble you're all right. He loves you."

"Loves, sir? That is a rightly good word. But I'm thinking as how it can't rightly be true—what you says. No, I hain't been the best of women, sir, and I fears as how I've took my own way."

"Have you, Mrs. Hamerton? Then you're better off than ever; for it's just such that He seems to like the best. At least, He had a Son, and a very long time ago He sent him to the earth out of the sky. Now this Son was very kind and He said that His Father had sent Him to seek and to save those that had taken their own way, as you say, and so were lost."

"That do sound wery good, sir!"

"Yes, and more yet, my woman. This Son spent His life going about among the bad and the poor in the down-town of his city——"

"Just like you, sir."

—"And He cured the people that were sick, and He made men happy when they were sad. And He told everybody who wanted to be good and not afraid to die, that they should do as He was doing. And that's the reason I've tried to do a little for you and Joe boy."

"Is it, sir? Then I know that He must have been wery good and kind. And, oh, I'm wery obliged to you!"

"Say to Him, my woman. Well, in spite of all He did for them men hated Him——"

"That were bad, sir."

—"And after a time they killed Him. But before he died He said that that was just what He had come for—to die for all those that did not want to be afraid to die."

"How is that, sir?"

"This, my woman: that nobody need be afraid to die any more, because His dying was their punishment for taking their own way."

"Oh, sir, that do seem rightly most too good to be true!"

"And yet it is all very true. His Father agreed to let

Him take the punishment for all the men that would thank Him for it. Yes, yes, He took it all for you and for me, Mrs. Hamerton ; and so we need neither of us be afraid to go."

"Is that the whole, sir?"

"That's the whole."

"Oh, sir, it's funny, but it do seem wery good and true—almost as if I had known it all before. And so I needn't be afraid of God when I'm dead because I can say : 'You let your Son be beat for me.'"

Philip could not keep back the tears that welled in his eyes as he replied :

"That is it, my woman—beat for me."

"Beat for me, beat for me," mammy faintly repeated. "Why it do seem as I saw it all plain, sir. And will I see that Son there, so I can say : 'I'm wery obliged to You, Sir?"

"Yes, yes," responded Philip, wiping away the tears.

"And all for love, all for love! Can you hear, Joe boy —all for love! Seems as I do feel mighty like crying, sir—but I hain't been no great hand at that."

Mammy ceased and a silence fell through the room as the shades of evening gathered in. After a few moments' rest, she again open her eyes and whispered :

"The day is going, Joey—going. Dear Joe boy—such a comfort! Somethink good afore I went. So glad. Fine and good. I'll tell that One to give an eye to you. Say —I—loved—them—yet."

Joe boy was too grief-stricken and overawed to speak, and again there was silence in the room for a number of minutes. Then mammy rose up suddenly and a bright smile played over her worn face, as she said eagerly :

"I'm wery obliged to You, Sir!"

Whom she spoke to, Philip could only guess ; for when the lips ceased to move they moved no more. And so, while the cold wind swept bleakly over the slant roof, mammy went with the day, and moved up where "everythink is that high."

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### AN UNDECIDED DECISION.

And all this time what of Robert Moreland? Having cast the die, having finally decided that there was only one course which he could pursue, he surely has revealed his bitter secret and stood before his beloved's eyes a transgressor and a hypocrite. But no, not so! Inconceivable as it may appear, the dark, ugly secret is a secret still. All the circumstances of the case remained unchanged; Rachel Underwood's threats were not retracted; and yet Robert Moreland's secret was not unlocked from its prison in the hidden chambers of his soul. Rachel's muttered words, as she turned from him at the City Hall, had been a prophecy. She had seen clearly—had read his character aright. She had unconsciously perceived that the true reason of her failure lay not in his devotion to Duty, but in his adherence to Pleasure. It had been less distasteful to him to face exposure than to accede to her demands. She had felt well assured that, under the same leadership, he would delay the fatal hour from time to time, and each day of continued immunity would but augment the ease of his procrastination. No, Robert had not yet been "his own detective." A thousand times since he informed his wife that he should be forced to tell her all on the morrow, he had determined with himself that he would speak; but when the appointed hour would come and the crucial moment was on him, his heart would fail, his resolution weaken, and all virtue go out of him. Each evening he would tell in the morning, and every morning he would tell in the evening. Like all procrastinators, he was strong for any time but the present—in which alone action is possible. His wife he continued to mislead from time to time,

by telling her that things had not been just what he had had expected, and that it did not seem best to him that she should yet know, and the subject gradually came to be little discussed between them.

The morning after Philip Maitland's late call, Robert was seated at his desk as usual, running rapidly through the bunch of letters which he found awaiting him. A bill for this ; a receipt for that ; an order for the other. But this fourth is in a woman's hand—no business letter. He opened it and read :

"MR. ROBERT MORELAND,

DEAR SIR :—You will, perhaps, remember a certain conversation which I held with you one night in a certain small, dark room concerning a certain dark young woman. Having learned your name from that same young woman by dint of my tender offices, and being now in need of a little pecuniary aid, I take the great liberty of addressing you for the trifling loan of $50.00. I am, sir,

Yours very truly,

MADAME GUILLON.

P. S.—I happen to remember it. G."

Robert re-read the letter and then tore in into twenty pieces.

"If she thinks—scheming villain that she was!—that she can squeeze money out of me by threatening me with exposure, she's much mistaken," he said to himself, as he sat at his desk trying to write. "To-night, when Rex is safely in bed and we are in our usual seats, I'll reveal my whole heart. But, my God! how a man's past does haunt him! I think I had best drop a note to her immediately, and let her know that Florence will know all without any of her assistance, and that from the man who committed the offence. Perhaps, however, I had better wait until to-morrow. After I've done it, my letter will have more weight. If I can say my wife knows all, it will be a crusher to her."

The Past slowly drew the hours of another day back into its all-enfolding bosom, and the sound of hurrying feet on the pavement grew into the busy tramp of an army. Robert Moreland heard the hastening throng, and it spread a foreboding chill through all his frame. He sought to brace himself for the duty which lay before him. For, in some unaccountable manner, the duty which he had felt quite strong to undertake in the morning, while a whole day stretched between him and it, was rapidly assuming frightful and menacing proportions. His resolution was alarmingly faint and he felt a debasing cowardice stifling his manhood.

He lingered awhile in the office striving to renew the confidence of the morning. He called up Rachel's dark menace and Madame Guillon's insinuating letter, that their remembrance might buttress his sorely shattered defences. But he could not recall the resolution of the morning. He resolved to go home and see whether Florence's love would strengthen him. Rex's thoughtless prattle might divert him, and he could come at the matter with fresh courage. And so Robert Moreland returned to his wife and boy. Did he reveal his secret that night? Oh, no. If the assurance of the morning had been quite unattainable at the store, his increased nearness in time and association to the supreme moment, buried it a hundred fathoms deep. Oh, how could he devastate that unsuspicious, loving bosom at his side! She would pardon and restore him —that he fully believed—but how could he wound her so suddenly and so sharply! She had placed him upon a lofty pedestal that she might bow down before him and worship her idol: how could he become a ruthless iconoclast? That ardent, selfish passion of devotion—he could not, would not blight it to-night! The very idea set his heart thumping. Perhaps the courage which had been his that morning, would return with a new day. "Not to-night, not to-night! There is no danger to-night. To-morrow—some other time will do." Poor, deluded one! who for-

got that the courage of the morning had been but a courage looking to the present moment of weakness.

As it began, so it had continued. In accord with Rachel's prophecy, each passing day of exemption from penalty had rendered the continued postponement of his self-betrayal less troublesome, until at length he quite ceased to agree with himself upon any exact hour for its execution, and actually to indulge the hope that Rachel had forgotten to fulfil a threat which could be of no gain to her, and abandoned herself to her life of sin and shame.

Madame Guillon never received the crushing letter which Robert had determined to send! On the contrary, she slickly fattened upon ill-gotten booty ever increasing in amount, and her voluble brother found his "extras" pleasantly augmenting from time to time—a fact which caused the Side Pocket to grow no less fat and flourishing.

It was with divided joy that Florence Moreland received her husband's announcement that he hoped to be able still to hide from her that which could only cause her pain. Her heart had grown lighter as she observed the lines of distress slowly fading into indistinctness on her husband's face; and yet, though no shadow of doubt cast its gloom over her noble mind, she almost unconsciously realized that something was not just as it had been. There was the same love, the same tender devotion on both sides, and yet a dim, spectral something seemed ever mutely present in the house. Seek to deny it or disown it as she might; endeavor to convince herself that it did not exist, by logically excluding all place for it; do what she would, nothing would quite bring again the hour of untouched and unquestioned bliss. And yet, had she been asked, with perfect honesty and ingenuousness she would have replied that Robert and she were just as contented and happy in each other's love as they had ever been.

"Women know no perfect love." A woman said it. Perhaps a woman with more head than heart. It is not the part of this history to take issue with the sentiment. Let this only be said, that the reason assigned for it by its

author, applied to the case of Robert Moreland and his wife, would have been most inapt and false. Certain it is that no one knowing all the truth, could have stood within the walls of that beautiful home and written :

> "Loving the strong, they can forsake the strong:
> Man clings because the being whom he loves
> Is weak and needs him."

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### AT THE MISSION.

This narration of sorrowful events and dark intrigues, which transpired within the noisy limits of our great metropolis quite unnoted by the metropolitans (who are too vastly absorbed in the market-prices of everything that may be priced to give much consideration to any other theme), leaving poor mammy to be buried in Christian burial, from her own hard-saved earnings, moves on past the date of the formal opening of Philip Maitland's Hall, to a time somewhat beyond it. During this period, Joe boy was a boarder, with Rachel Underwood's consent and at her expense, in the snug little home of Ralph Sidgwick, who will be recalled as the teacher of Philip's school, a position which he still filled, though now in the roomier and sweeter quarters afforded by an airy apartment in the rear of Philip's commodious Hall.

Philip's philanthropic enterprise was a gratifying success. Not only its school, but also its baths, its gymnasium, its music-room, its billiard-parlor and its cheery and tasteful reading-room, were well patronized ; and while Philip was able to point out homes rehabilitated, young men and women rescued from a deeper descent upon the mad slope of sin and shame, men and women grown old in vice and crime, reclaimed to a long-lost light and purity, he could not begin to estimate the subtile and far-reaching influence of this his life's work in elevating, and re-invigorating with a renewed and nobler life, hearts conceived in sin and born in iniquity.

Upon a certain February afternoon, in that apartment of "The People's Hall" set aside and furnished for Philip's office, sat little Rose Maitland and mammy's Joe boy—

Rose with flaxen hair and laughing blue eyes, Joe dark in hair and skin and with large dark eyes. They were a winning picture as they sat there in the closing light of that winter's day, and no most acute observer, looking upon them, could have told which was beggar and which was lord.

"Wasn't it funny," said little Rose, "that brother Phil should have taken me to your house that time?"

"It was nice, too," returned Joe. "I almost forgot we were poor and sick, because you made me think so much."

"You don't think rich people are any better than poor ones, do you?" continued Rose.

"No!" stoutly responded Joe boy.

"I don't either. Only mamma and Madge do, and they try to make me, but I won't. You're poor—or you used to be—but you're just as nice as Rex Moreland. Isn't it strange? I'm his aunt. You're just as nice as he is—nicer."

Joe boy's countenance plainly revealed that he was not insensible to this touch.

"Some rich people are awful nice," he observed with deep cunning, "but as long as I live I never expect to find any rich one as nice as my poor mammy. She used to feel things and they came out right, too. She used to feel, before she took and died, that I was going to be a fine, good, big man some day: do you think I will, Rose?"

"I know you will. You'll be as nice as Rex any way. I'm going to have a party—all my own."

"You are?"

"Yes, and—I hope you won't mind—I wanted to ask you, but Madge made *such* a dreadful fuss, and mamma said perhaps I better not. But I wanted you just the same, and that's just as good as coming."

"I guess it's just as good as far as you go," replied the boy, "but somehow it don't seem just the same. You'll like other boys who always have been rich and used to going to parties and things, a good deal better than you will me."

"No, I won't!" exclaimed Rose with Edenic freedom from shame. "They seem more like girls than you do. And besides, they don't know anything about all the things we do down here at brother Phil's; and they haven't ever been in a tenement in all their life; and they haven't got such pretty eyes as you."

At this most interesting point in the conversation, there was a knock at the street door, and Joe ran to call Peter, the janitor. Peter having duly arrived with his characteristic shuffle, threw open the door to a woman of striking appearance, rather gaudily dressed and with a peculiar, almost wild expression in her great dark eyes.

"Well, mum?"

"Is Mr. Maitland in?"

"No, mum. He's out. Leave a message?"

"How long is he likely to be gone?"

"As much as half-an-hour, mum."

While this conversation was in progress, the woman was eagerly devouring with her eyes the two small occupants of the room, and there was an expression upon her handsome face which might have said: "As I intended, as I intended."

"I'll come in and wait for him," she said, "if I may. Children and I always get along well, and we will be company for each other."

So saying, the woman entered and took her place near the door upon the sofa where Rose and Joe boy were seated.

"How nice it is here," she said, after Peter had responded, "Yes, mum," and shuffled away. "What is your name, little girl?"

"My name is Miss Rose Maitland," replied Rose with becoming dignity.

"Miss Rose Maitland!" repeated the woman. "It can't be that you're a little sister of Mr. Philip Maitland?"

"He's my big brother, ma'am."

"Oh, isn't that nice! And can you be Miss Rose's brother?" turning to Joe boy.

The children both laughed.

"Oh, no, ma'am," said Joe. "I'm only a—I'm another boy. We only know each other."

"And won't you tell me your name, too?"

"My name is Joe—Joe Hamerton."

"Joe Hamerton—that's a nice name, too. What a good time you both must have here together. You've both got such nice names, and you're both so pretty. Some day you'll be falling in love, if you're not careful. Why, you said Joe Hamerton, didn't you? Dear me! I didn't think: you must be the one I know about. Yes, yes, I know the lady that sends you money by a Mr. Slack, my little fellow. She's a friend of mine, and such a nice lady. What do you suppose she told me the other day?"

Joe boy didn't know.

"Well, she said that when you grew up, as she hadn't any little boys and girls of her own, she meant to call you her boy and give you plenty of money to live on, and when she dies leave you enough to make you a very rich man. Yes, that's what she told me. So if you ever should fall in love with Miss Rose, you'd have plenty of money and be almost as rich as she was. But there, I've told you both what I came to tell Mr. Maitland, and so I won't have to wait for him any longer. You can remember it between you, I'm sure."

Receiving an assuring answer, she took a sweet good-bye, and went her way, saying to herself as she went:

"As if I didn't know he wasn't there and they were! That's a good point scored. Must be occasionally repeated to keep it fresh in mind. Ah, pink and white, you shall be all white! Rose Maitland to Joe Hamerton. What a scheme! It will work—it shall work—*it is working!* Will you come to me, then, Robert Moreland, sooner than be exposed? Oh, God! my head does feel queer!"

"Just another of mammy's feels!" cried Joe. "She felt it was money before, and it was; and now it's money again. I suppose I'll be awful rich, and I'll do heaps of good to poor people when I am. Do you suppose they'd let me come to your party if they knew?"

"I guess may be, perhaps, they would," responded Rose. "If they knew it was going to be—oh, a thousand hundred, I *know* they would."

The dark woman, who was of course no other than Rachel Underwood, pursued her homeward way till it brought her to the same rough tenement and to the identical room in which we have been wont to see her. To be sure, the room is warmed by a new stove, and the old, dilapidated wall has been renewed, and some comforts have been added; yet none the less there is nothing to account for the presence of this handsome, highly-dressed woman here, except the potent influence of habit and association. The present is the child of the past: the fetters of the past are fetters which hold.

"I've been so wild and bad again," she said, seating herself before the stove and speaking in a whisper with a puzzled contraction of her brows, as if all connected thinking were difficult and distressing. "I've been so wild and bad with all my money (and I must get another thousand from the old murderer soon), that Robert's almost gone out of my mind. I'd like to see him here once more: I feel kind of hungry for him. Told? No indeed, he hasn't told—don't dream of telling—thinks I've forgotten him. I'll write him that I've reformed and he has nothing to fear, and ask him to come and see how I'm fixed up and talk to me and make me good. That'll bring him; and hearing from me after this time, will scare him up a bit and make him curious to know whether I'm telling the truth. Oh, heavenly Lord! I wish my head didn't feel so queer and shaky. It scares me!"

That night Rachel, in common with hundreds of others from like tenements, attended the free concert at The People's Hall. What a strange audience was assembling there! Now a poor, lone woman, worn to skin and bones by hard work and harder wages; now a smart young dude, intent on prey; now a saucy shop-girl with a dissolute male companion, "out for a lark;" now a good, wholesome house-servant with red cheeks and

redder hands; now a tottering, gray-haired man bowing towards the grave with the weight of years or vice; now a bevy of young girls, alone or with a similar bevy of highly-perfumed beaux; now a set of rollicking youths "in for whatever was up." Families and friends, youth and age, pickpockets and jail-birds, incendiaries and assassins, men, women and children of all ages and descriptions—in they flowed, drawn by the universal love of music, until the Hall was filled and the doors were closed.

The most interesting event of the evening was the rendering of "Home, Sweet Home" by a Mrs. Avington. As her thrilling, sympathetic voice poured forth the well-known words of the final song, the house grew quieter and quieter, until an absolute stillness prevailed. "There's no place like home, There's no place like home." The deathly silence broken only by that sweet, feeling voice, what heart could refuse to melt under it? One old man on the right gave way, and his broken sobs added to the intensity of the occasion. An answering sob escaped from a young girl who sat near him, whose early country home, with its kind parents and brothers and sisters, had been sadly obliterated by woful sin. Poor broken-hearted and broken-spirited women, who had known better homes before John went to the bad and Jake took to drink, wept freely. Even rough men, whose hearts had known no softening touch for long years, wiped away unwilling tears with their great rough hands. It was a melting scene.

After the concert, Rachel returned to her attic with emotions which withered her heart, and sadly augmented the "queer" feeling of her head. And Robert Moreland was growing happier every day! Pursuant to her resolve, the following day she betook herself to Philip's reading-room and penned the following note to her betrayer:

"You've almost forgotten me by this time, and I had almost forgotten you. If you haven't told yet, you

needn't. I've reformed at last and you have nothing to fear. I've been wild and bad again and I want to be good. I'm writing you this to ask you to come to me some night soon and see how I'm fixed up, and talk to me the way you tried to once when I wouldn't let you. Say you come Friday night: I'll meet you at the City Hall at half-past eight.

RACHEL."

## CHAPTER XXX.

### A WOMAN'S LOVE.

When Robert Moreland tore open Rachel's letter and beheld her name inscribed below it, it seemed to him that some invisible hand of crime had treacherously plunged a cold steel deep into his heart. A sickening throe of agony quivered through his whole frame. His hands were clammy before he had read a word. His slumbering fears awoke with a rude start. He felt that his day of reckoning had come. Rachel had not forgotten him: he yet must confess! Florence yet must suffer. His eyes strained to grasp the whole contents of the page at a glance. With breathless haste he read the note through. What should he think? Was this sincere, or was it the first step in some wily scheme to compass his ruin? If the latter, why had Rachel waited so long? Had it required all this time to accomplish her menaces? He read the note again and yet again. How open-hearted and repentant it sounded! Oh, if it were true! At all events the best he could do was to go to Rachel at the time appointed.

Accordingly, on the Friday morning following, as he bade his wife good-bye for another day, he announced the probability of his being detained longer than usual in the office that afternoon. He might, he said, even be unable to return in time for dinner, and instructed her not to delay the meal for him. Of course he did not return, and half-past eight found him, as was to be expected, making his way at a rapid pace towards the City Hall. Arrived near it, he observed a tall, well-proportioned woman, rather conspicuously dressed, walking up and down the esplanade before it. To his surprise, this woman approached him with an air of recognition. What was

his complete astonishment, when, on closer inspection, the woman proved to be no other than Rachel Underwood.

"Why, Rachel!" he exclaimed, "is this you?"

"You must judge," she replied. "I think it is."

"I did not recognize you at first."

"Did you expect to see the same Rachel you left?"

"Why yes, I suppose I did—in looks."

"That was only natural, perhaps. We forget how people change while we don't see them, and we haven't seen each other in a long time. You haven't changed so much, though. But come: it's too cold to stand here any longer. We'll go to my old quarters. You look surprised. You think it's funny for one dressed like me to still be living there. Well, perhaps it is; but somehow it's been hard to think of getting away. You see it's home there, and I'm used to it. But it's warmer now and a little more fixed up—though there's too many rats and mice about to make it sensible to fix up extra nice."

Rachel had already begun to lead in the old direction which Robert remembered. As he followed her, he found himself interrogating his own mind respecting the probability of her reform from the evidence which he had already received. She was much too highly dressed—he had seen that at a glance—and she had, he thought, watched him to mark the effect of her appearance upon him. Then, too, where had all the money come from? And she was still living in the same forlorn tenement, amid the same scenes of filth and vice. Had her life felt the power of any deep and genuine repentance, would not almost her first impulse have been to get forever away from her vicious surroundings? He was disappointed, greatly disheartened; and, as he followed the rapidly moving woman, there crept over him a sensation of loathsome bitterness.

Arrived at their destination, Robert found the narrow apartment quite rehabilitated and cheerful. The room was warm and light, the stove was well-blacked, the

floor was carpeted, and a general air of neatness and comfort prevailed. But these improvements tended little to reassure him. They might be but the evidence of a more refined degradation.

"This is better, ain't it?" said Rachel.

"Indeed it is, Rachel. I am more than glad to find you in so much sweeter quarters. But why do you stick to this miserable old building? You do not look well: there is a nervous unrest in your manner, and a strange, wild look in your eyes. This air is as filthy as the water in the gutter. Why don't you move away from this? If you need money you know I am ready and willing to furnish it."

"You're not speaking out, Mr. Moreland—I see you're not. You suspect that all this fixing up may mean something bad. I have been bad: I told you that in the letter. But I get the money from one who has wronged me; it's right that I should. He's a rich one, too, and it don't hurt him—not as much as it ought. No, Robert—Mr. Moreland, I mean—don't suspect me. You ask me why I don't move away from here. Some way I can't. I know it ain't healthy. No, I don't feel well. Perhaps that's one reason I felt so much like seeing you. It made me lonely like. No, no, my head's been queer again for some time. And oh, Mr. Moreland, I am glad to see you. It does me so much good. I hope you didn't mind coming: you needn't have come if you didn't want to. Oh, talk to me the way you tried to that night when I wouldn't listen to you, about being good. I've been so wild and bad again, and I'm sick of sinning, and oh, I want to be good—good!"

Robert was strongly inclined to believe it.

"I'm all unworthy to talk to any one, Rachel. Oh, I can never forgive myself, I can never enough curse myself for my awful sin! Talk to you? What shall I say? How can you believe me? And yet, Rachel, I would see you again what you once were. I would see you out of this, and well and happy and good once more. Oh, I

cannot preach to you, I cannot! Have you ever heard of The People's Hall, Rachel?"

"We've all heard of that around here."

"Well, I am not worthy to talk to you: it seems blasphemous. Go to him—to Mr. Maitland, I mean. He's good and he's true and he's almost sinless. Go to him, and talk with him. He will help you and give you hope and courage. He's my brother-in-law."

"Is he?"

"Yes, so don't tell him my name if he asks you about your past life. Goodness! I never thought of that. You might have gone to him before, and not knowing who he was, have mentioned my name! Have you indeed forgiven me?"

"Do you doubt it?"

"Oh, Rachel, sin makes us doubt. But tell me: did you have any scheme in your mind when you threatened me, or were you only trying to frighten me into coming back?"

"Both. Yes, I had a fearful scheme—fearful! Oh, can I give it up!"

"Do not excite yourself, Rachel," said Robert, almost convinced of the woman's sincerity. "You hardly seem yourself to-night. Your life has told on you. Can't you tell me calmly what your plan was?"

"I'll try, but I'm queer-like. Your being here seems to be too good for me to stand now. My scheme? It was to send Shadow after your little Rex, and then make your coming to me the price of his return."

"My God above! And why haven't you done it?"

"Because soon after you left, I got wild and bad again, and almost forgot you, as I wrote."

"Oh, Rachel, Rachel, God forgive you for your forgiveness of me! How can you, how can you forgive!"

As Robert spoke there was a wild rush of fevered longing to Rachel's countenance. She sprang from the chair where she was sitting, and with an impassioned cry flung herself upon him and locked her arms about his neck,

"How! How!" she cried. "Because I love you, Robert, my Robert! Because I'm hungry for you! Oh, come back to me—come back to your first love, who loves you still!"

"The poor creature had but finished her wild cry, and Robert was in vain endeavoring to dislodge her arms from his neck, when there was a knock at the door.

"For God's sake, woman, forbear!" he hoarsely muttered.

"No, no, no, Robert! It's nobody but my bothersome neighbors. Go way from the door, I say! I don't want you here! Oh, Robert, come, come, come back to me!"

With all his efforts Robert could not succeed in releasing himself before there was a second knock outside, and to his horror the door was pushed gently open.

"*Florence!*"

Oh, that bitter, despairing cry of shame, of terror, of agony! It burst forth from the lips of the unhappy man with a wild, unnatural vehemence. His wife had suspected him, followed him—overtaken him! Oh, that unearthly cry! It even aroused Rachel. She turned her great, flashing eyes from Robert's face and looked towards the door. Florence Moreland and Philip Maitland! What brush of subtlest artist shall depict the overcharged currents of emotion which interlaced across the little room? What pen shall recount the tale those faces told? Look at the noble, high-souled wife, as the awful spectacle meets her eye. Her husband, her passionately loved and undoubted Robert wrapped in the embrace of a highly-dressed, madly-beautiful woman! Her eyes burned and looked away, and looked and burned again. She must believe her senses. It had been his voice: it was his face. Yet how? Sweet, strong and true herself, and loving with a blind devotion, she had found nothing but sweetness, strength, and truth in the man of her choice. How, then, could this picture be real? God! what a strife was there! With what despairing energy did the habit of wifely love and trust battle with the scene before her in

its endeavors to explain it and leave the man unsoiled. Madly it fought—but in vain. Yet not all in vain, for Florence did perceive the true significance of the horrid picture. Her husband's countenance, his visible dissent from Rachel's mood, the long days and nights of agony and suspense which they had both known, her unshakable confidence in the true discernment of her own love, in the assurance that such devotion as hers could not have attached itself to an object wholly unworthy, saved her from a rash overleaping of the man's offence, and interpreted to her its exact character. She divined aright the meaning of the whole sad drama from beginning to end. Her misery was unspeakable, yet not more intense than the truth evoked. The shock to her deep and unsuspecting nature was terrific. She staggered weakly against her brother and a dark dizziness obscured her vision.

Denied that intuitive keenness of vision which is the portion only of perfect love, Philip Maitland did not perceive aright the perspective of the revolting canvas of which he was so unexpected a spectator. He saw only a scene of inexplicable disloyalty and loathsome disgrace. He saw the husband of his loved sister clandestinely in the embrace of a fallen woman. Hard as it was for him to realize that this horror-struck man was the friend of his life, the evidence was too strong, and a feeling of manly indignation and disgust rose up within his unsoiled breast.

All these reflections had occupied but a moment's time, and during its passage Rachel continued to cling wildly to Robert's neck. Still retaining her position, she now spoke.

"Get out of here!" she shrieked, as Philip wisely closed the door against any curious new-comers. "What business have you here? Yes, stare away, with your pretty, thieving eyes, mine are as handsome as yours! Oh, pink and white, where is your pink now? What makes you so pale? So you suspected he had a first, did you? Ah, he has, though, and she is me, me! Which of us does he really love? Ask him. Do men love those they keep for

show on the avenues, or those they creep off to when they want comfort and love? Yes, yes, I'm his first: you're his second. Take your jealous eyes off of me, if you don't like to see how pretty I am, and how well I'm dressed. Where do I get the money from? Ask him—ask your husband. He's got plenty for two. He's enough for the one he shows and for the one he loves. Oh, my head, my head! Get away, go away, go away, or I'll call the police! Go away, I say! Leave us alone to our love!"

These last outcries were occasioned by the approach of Florence Moreland, who had recovered herself by this time and, having crossed the room to where her husband sat encircled by Rachel's arms, was about to address him. Before she spoke, however, she laid her hand upon his shoulder. Rachel, with jealous petulance, angrily threw it off. In so doing she perforce relinquished her grasp upon Robert's neck and he released himself. Both rose to their feet. The husband, the wife, and the harlot stood confronting each other.

"Robert," said Florence calmly, though her lip quivered with the strength of her emotions and her face was as white and cold as marble, "Robert, I see it all. Look at me, my husband."

The miserable man slowly raised his coward eyes.

"I see it all," Florence continued. "Our coming here was all an accident. It was merely the fulfilment of Phil's promise to take me with him some night. I had no suspicions: I understand fully the reason of your being here. Look at me, my husband, and tell me what you see in my eyes."

"I was not here for sin!" groaned Robert.

"I understand it all," repeated Florence. "Do not take your eyes from me."

"Leave me, leave me!" groaned Robert afresh. "Don't soil your lips by speaking to me! Go! Go, and hate me, despise me! Oh, leave me, leave me!"

"Yes, go!" repeated Rachel. "Can't you see he don't

want you here? You're for show: I'm for love. Let me comfort him alone. Go! This is my house. Get out!"

"Hush, woman!" commanded Florence. "Robert, look at me."

"He'd rather look at me!" screamed Rachel.

"Look at me, Robert," continued Florence.

Again the shame-held eyes were lifted.

"Don't talk to me, don't, don't!" he cried. "Hate me, renounce me! Oh, do not look at me like that! Say you loathe me and go!"

"I tell you go!" again interrupted Rachel. "Go, before I kill you? I tell you my head is queer and I don't know what I may do. Get out! Go!"

"Be quiet," again ordered Florence, superhumanly calm, with every nerve tense. "Robert, my Robert, why will you not look at me? Tell me what you see in my face. Tell me, my husband."

"Don't call me that! It kills me with shame! Oh, if you love me, tell me you hate me—spurn me!"

"She does hate you!" exclaimed Rachel, eagerly and maliciously. "Can't you see she does? That's what makes her so quiet. Why don't you make her leave you? Do you hear me? Get out of my house! Oh, my head! There, take that!"

As Rachel finished speaking, she leaned over as she stood, and scornfully spit into Florence's marble face. Robert Moreland was transformed in a twinkling.

"Stop!" he cried. "You shall not!"

"How can you talk so to one you love?" demanded Rachel. "Oh, my head is whirling like mad! I *will* do it. There!"

The insulting act was no sooner repeated than Robert leaped upon her, and wrapping his strong right arm about her waist, with his left hand stopped her mouth.

"You sha'n't!" he muttered.

"Robert, leave her alone," said Florence. "You have no right to touch her. If she finds comfort or satisfaction in it, I wish her to do it."

Robert Moreland's grasp loosened as if he had been stricken with paralysis. "You have no right to touch her." His wife's words were like an instantaneous poison. His whole manhood drooped beneath their touch.

"Oh, you nasty thing!" screamed Rachel. "I'll spit in yours. Oh, you dirty rake!"

So saying the angry woman fulfilled her threat. Robert offered no remonstrance. Florence seemed about to protest, when, recollecting herself, she addressed her husband again instead.

"Robert, you did not tell me. What do you see in my face?"

"Oh, I want to see hate, hate!" cried the miserable man. "I want to see hate—*but I see love!*"

"My Robert, you see aright: let me prove it to you."

Florence Moreland approached her husband, deliberately put her arms about his neck and kissed him.

"You sha'n't!" shrieked Rachel. "You sha'n't do that in my house! Oh, my head is going to twist off and burst! But I say you sha'n't! I'll tear your eyes out! I'll kill you!"

The poor creature afforded frightful evidence of the truth of her words, for, like an infuriated wild-cat she flew upon the woman who had molested her in her lair, madly clenching her cheeks in her long fingers, and shrieking aloud: "You sha'n't, you sha'n't, you sha'n't!" At this juncture Philip rushed forward from his stand at the door, and with Robert's assistance succeeded in loosening the fierce, claw-like clutch. Wrested from her prey, she stood between her captors, staring wildly first at one then at the other. On a sudden, as she stood thus quiveringly quiet, a passionate energy seemed to take possession of her whole being like some evil demon. With an unexpected and irresistible twitch, she tore herself loose, and uttering a long, triumphant, frenzied shriek, darted towards the sole window which pierced the tenement wall. It was closed. Not pausing to open it, and never for an instant intermitting her unearthly cry, she flew recklessly at it,

like an imprisoned wild beast desperately intent on escape. It readily gave way before her impetuous rush, and was shivered into a hundred pieces, the sound of its breaking mingling with the blood-chilling screams with shocking fitness. Before any one of the three spectators of the awful tragedy had time fully to realize what was in progress, they were left alone—stunned. For a second or two the same mad shrieks came in at the shivered sash; then there was a horrid thud in the hard court below—and there was silence!

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### MR. SLACK'S DAY ARRIVES.

Why linger on the frightful scene? Why stand with the police and the coroner over Rachel's crushed and mangled body? Why follow her to the grave in which her fevered career ended, and in which she was laid at Florence Moreland's expense? Why curiously gloat over the details of Robert Moreland's confession as he again sat in his library by his wife's side, but now with shameful and averted eyes? Why picture in all its aching harshness, the bitter, burning hours of hidden, heart-withering anguish to which the scene she had witnessed and her husband's full revelation gave birth within the breast of the noble wife? Rachel Underwood (Florence had known her in the Moreland household) ruined, crazed, murdered; the child born in sin, and dying no doubt of neglect and privation; and all this the work of her loved and idolized husband! Every man or woman who has known perfect love can guess something of Florence Moreland's killing heartache: let the reluctant pen be relieved of an office which the heart and imagination can less painfully perform.

With what diverse emotions came the unexpected news of Rachel's mad act to employer and employed in the office of Jeremiah Hardangle. With Silas Slack there was a bound of triumph. For though the little man, in spite of his swelling words, would much have preferred the backing of a fearless, strong-minded partner in his move against his employer, yet, when the affair was brought to his ears, he rubbed his hands together, as he realized that now the Champion Grinder was in his hands. The lawyer, on his part, examined the revolver which he had

carried in his pocket from the time of Rachel's extorting visit, made a thorough inspection of his locked closet, and spent his time in anxious expectation of a visit from those other parties whom Rachel had declared to be in possession of his secret.

Two days thus passed over the heads of Mr. Hardangle and his servant. On the third, coming to his office at the usual hour, the man of law found his waiting-room locked, and no Silas within to open it. Supposing that his employee had been taken suddenly sick during the night, he made use of his own key and sat down at his desk, quite dismissing the subject of Mr. Slack's absence from his mind. He had been ensconced in his legal sanctum but little more than an hour, when his man-of-all-work put in an unexpected appearance, looking perhaps a trifle nervous, but otherwise usually well. He did not pause in the waiting-room to remove his outer garments, but without even the ceremony of announcing his arrival, swaggered into the main office, his hat still upon his head, and an air of proprietorship about his whole person. Here he threw himself into a seat and raised a pair of impudent eyes to those which were peering at him over the lawyer's desk. Such actions were by no means customary on the part of the servile Silas, nor were they at all in accord with his employer's sentiments of propriety.

"What do you mean by this?" demanded the lawyer, sternly.

"I don't perceive and understand to what you refer by 'this,'" responded the little man in as cool a voice as he could command.

Mr. Hardangle was angered.

"I shall understand by it that you intend to leave," he declared shortly. "Your impudence is not to be borne. You understand, I am done with you. I owe you by this time some ten dollars. Here it is. Take it and go, and don't let me see your brazen, ungrateful face here again."

Mr. Slack, by reason of his cowardly disposition, was verily minded to go rather than cross swords with a man

of such presence and force of personality. However, he screwed up his courage in view of the prize before him. He also screwed up his face.

"Mr. Lawyer Hardangle, Esquire, do you know what you are? Lest you don't, I'll say and declare it to you. You're a grinder and a rascal!"

With a sudden flash of insight which nothing but the habit of a life-time prevented from altering the one fixed expression of his hard, dark countenance, the lawyer divined the portentous, inner meaning of the fellow's words. Silas—wordy, harmless Silas,—whom he would scarcely have credited with enough sense to eat his dinner; this man who had been his daily companion, had been Rachel, Underwood's partner, the sharer with her of his guilty secret. How in the name of Heaven had it come to pass that he was in possession of it; why Rachel had told him, if she had, or why he had told her, if that were the proper order; or what was the true inwardness of any portion of the whole mysterious affair from beginning to end, Jeremiah Hardangle could give no guess. Nevertheless it was certain that Rachel had known, and now there was little reason to doubt Silas's knowledge. However, he would not cry before he was hurt.

"Silas Slack, you impudent scoundrel, if you do not take this money and go, I'll call the police!"

Mr. Slack found his courage rather shaky, but somewhat stronger now that the battle was fairly on.

"You call the police!" he echoed with as much disdain as he could muster. "You appeal to the strong arm of the law! You even tell me to go! Don't try your bluff on me, Hardangle, it won't work. It won't go down, you Turner at Law. I've stood your ways and your manners as long as I'm going to. Oh, you grinder, I've got you at last!"

Lawyer Hardangle looked intently at the little fellow before him a moment, and then said, as if to himself:

"The little man has gone clean crazy."

"Hardangle, I tell you you can't bluff me!" spluttered

Mr. Slack. "Did you ever call on Madame Guillon, Hardangle, to get and procure evidence which might some day hold him back from prosecuting you? Did you ever hear of such a firm as Shadow and Bags, Hardangle? or of Rachel Underwood, Hardangle? I sent her here, I sent her here!"

"You sent her here, did you?"

"Yes, I sent her here, did I. I gave her the papers which proved your forgery. Ah, you've ground me, Hardangle, kept me on starvation pay all my days, never advanced or elevated me an inch in the eyes of the profession. Yes, you've ground me; but I've bled you, and it's I who expect to bleed you now!"

Lawyer Hardangle left his seat behind the desk, and closed and locked the door into the waiting-room. Leaning against it facing Mr. Slack, he coolly drew from his hip-pocket his gleaming little weapon. Mr. Slack felt his heart make a very serious attempt to get out at his throat.

"Slack," said the lawyer, "you don't like the look of this little fellow, do you? I shouldn't think you would, knowing who holds it. For the present, however, all I say is: Have a care. You spoke of papers and a forgery. That is absurd. There was no forgery: how can there be any papers?"

"How?" repeated Mr. Slack, keeping his eyes sharply fixed upon the revolver. "How? Did you ever, in this office, write the name of one of your kinsmen over and over again on a piece of paper? Did any such paper get covered up beneath the pages of a certain law-book? Did any one ever discover that hidden paper? Could that finder and discoverer have been I? Could any one of these things be possible, Hardangle?"

So far the mystery was explained. Silas, in the discharge of his duties, had come upon one of the practice-sheets used in perfecting the forgery, and Rachel Underwood had been acquainted with its contents. But why had it been exhibited to her? Was this the starting-point of her suspicions, or had she already revealed her dark

knowledge to Slack? Had the paper been sufficient to arouse his suspicions, knowing, as he did, that the name upon it appeared in the will? Mr. Hardangle could frame no satisfactory replies. He would learn what he could from the little man before him.

"Silas," he said, speaking in a low and confidential tone, "it's no use trying to stave you off any longer. You and Miss Underwood between you have been too many for me. Of course you expect to sell your discovery at a good market price: of course I've got to give you that price. And now, before we agree on terms, I want to ask you a favor. I'm free to say that I am unable to unravel the course of events which put you both in possession of the knowledge which you have obtained. You have nothing to lose by telling me, and I have nothing to gain, save the satisfaction of my curiosity. I ask you now, as man to man, to tell me the inner history of the case."

Mr. Slack, true to his nature, seeing the lawyer less defiant, grew more bold and uncompromising.

"What I know is my business, Hardangle. I did not come here to tell any tales. I came to make terms. What's more, I shall not brook or endure further delay."

"You little fool!" exclaimed the man of law. "If you didn't make me laugh with your big strut, you'd make me mad. Do you see this pistol?"

As Mr. Hardangle spoke, he cocked the revolver and pointed it full in the face of Mr. Slack, who instinctively shrank lower down in his chair and signified that he did see it.

"From your actions I imagine you do. Now, look here, you Silas, before you leave this room (if you leave it alive at all) I expect to know all you know about the inward history of this affair. Listen to me: I had one man put out of the way—you know that. I forged a will in my own favor—you know that. In your estimation, Slack, am I a desperate man?"

Mr. Slack, squirming uneasily in his chair, as his eyes

looked squarely into the barrel of the raised revolver, thought there could be no reasonable doubt of it.

"No," continued the lawyer, "there can be no doubt of it. Do you know what a fool you were to come here and put yourself in the power of a desperate man who stops at nothing? I think you are beginning to realize it. What's to prevent my murdering you here and now, and then trumping up some yarn to the effect that you attempted to rob me, and I shot you with your own weapon in self-defence? By God! I've a mind to do it! Then I'm free from blackmailers for the rest of my days and can live in peace once more. I believe I will. I believe that's my——"

As he spoke, he moved slowly towards Mr. Slack, until the murderous revolver almost touched his forehead.

"Don't shoot! Don't shoot! I'll tell all I know!" ejaculated the frightened man. "But it ain't much: I was only the junior partner. We swore, but she broke the oath. Point the other way, and I'll squeal!"

The man of law, scarcely able to restrain a smile, lowered his weapon, and Mr. Slack proceeded to give a pretty faithful account of the whole matter. When he had made an end, the lawyer, seeing that he had indeed told all his heart, remarked:

"Now that you've done, I've the greatest mind in the world to shoot you anyhow. Be quiet! Don't make a sound, or I'll finish you as quick as lightning. Yes, you were a fool. But it isn't a nice job to murder too many men, and have the explanation of their death and disappearance on your hands. It isn't a nice memory, either—a dead man's face. So I'll tell you what I'll do. You shall have enough money to live without work, and to live much better than you do now, and to get drunk every night besides. What do you say?"

"I say I came here to dictate terms," rather faintly responded Mr. Slack. "Honesty compels me."

"And I say that I shall give them, if they're given at all. You are making now, Silas, besides the clothes that I keep

you in, you are making a dollar for every day in the year. I will release you from all work, and give you, instead, twenty dollars a week for the rest of your mortal days. I say I'll give you that—or I'll give you this!"

As he spoke, Lawyer Hardangle pulled the trigger of his revolver, causing Mr. Slack to jump from his chair like a skying rocket, although the hammer had fallen upon an empty chamber.

"I take the terms!" cried the palpitating little man.

"I thought you would. Do you call them good?"

Mr. Slack's head assented, and, to do him justice, though the lawyer's "spill" was not as ignominious as he could have desired, his heart did also.

"Call here twice a year," the lawyer went on, "and I'll pay you the money; but don't trouble me oftener. And don't make too big a display of your wealth—it might be suspicious. If it ever should be—mind yourself! Come to me to-morrow night at my house, and I'll give you your first half-yearly installment. I believe that is all."

Mr. Slack was glad to believe the same, and in less than a minute was on his rejoicing way towards the bosom of his family and the wife of his youth.

That evening the Side Pocket was in all its accustomed glory of heat and smell, of oaths and licentious tales, and had pocketed its full quota of guests. Among others, the red-bearded stranger presented himself, clad in his rusty garments, and with his greasy slouch hat drawn well over his eyes. As on the former occasion, the stranger gave every evidence of being deprived of all ability to hear or speak, and again made signs to Shadow to follow him from the saloon. This Shadow straightway did, and the two, as before, took their way to The Toot.

"Well, what might it be now, red-beard?" asked the more notorious of the two villains, when they had seated themselves in a remote corner of The Toot. "Anybody else yer'd like to have me do fur yer?"

"We'll talk about that later," responded Joe Collins.

"For the present, perhaps you didn't know that your daughter was dead."

"What!" exclaimed Shadow, yet in a muffled voice. "Dead! Be yer comin' here to let on that them there other fellers, what Rachel spoke about, is up fur game? Dead! Speak up, lawyer!"

"Yes, dead. Went mad, threw herself out of her window into the court and smashed herself all to bits. A fine one, you are! Why, you might have sat in the Pocket till those other parties came with the police and nabbed you. A man that follows your sort of business ought to keep well abreast of all the news that's going. Well, mind yourself now, and I'll tell you something that will interest you. Said other parties are up for game, and they've come to me!"

"The deuce yer say!"

"Yes, they've come to me; and who do you suppose they are?"

"Riddles be blasted! Come out with yer names!"

"Silas Slack!"

"Ye're chinnin'!"

"The exact truth. Silas Slack."

"Is he the hull?"

"He's the only one, so far as he knew. Rachel undoubtedly referred to him."

"What did he shoot off?"

"You know your daughter's game. He worked the same."

"And what did yer make up with him?"

"Twenty dollars a week and no work."

"Yer calls him safe at that figger?"

"I have small fears of his throwing up such a job for nothing."

"Then what did yer want with me?"

"I wanted to see that you knew Rachel was dead, and tell you how the land lay. It's safest you should know. And then, as to little Slack—of course there's always a little danger as long as there's anybody around that's in

the secret. I thought I'd let you know about him, and if you thought best—why, you'd do what you thought best."

"Best nuthin'! I don't croak no more, unless I has to. That there other fixin' war enough fur me. But I know what I will do: I'll thrash him. I've warned him more nor once not to make a certain subject the staple of his gab, and now he's gone and done it."

"Have a care, Shadow. You might anger him into telling."

"Do yer think yer kin give me pints? I tell yer when I'm done with his hide, he'll feel like as if he'd been in pickle in the bay for goin' on a twelve-month. He's more skeered of me than he is of the Devil."

"Well, be careful, is all I've got to say. One hung: two hung."

Upon the afternoon following, Mr. Silas Slack was resting under his own vine and fig-tree, preparatory to another night of conviviality at his favorite saloon. In lieu of better accommodations he had thrown a bed-quilt in the corner near his wife's cooking-stove, and was snoozing away in perfect tranquillity, comfortably dreaming, no doubt, of the lazy rewards of perfect honesty. So profound was his slumber that a loud knock which sounded through his apartments during the course of it failed to arouse him. His wife, wearing no altered appearance now that she had in very truth become the lady her husband had foretold, rose from the darning upon which she was engaged, and was about to answer the summons, when the door was roughly thrown open and a tall, brawny, fierce-looking individual thrust his head inside and demanded whether Silas Slack was within. While the question was yet upon his lips, his eyes caught sight of the "Lawyer's" prostrate form, and without more ceremony he stalked into the room. Slamming the door after him and crossing where Mr. Slack lay, he rudely seized him by the collar of his superabundant coat, and simultaneously jerked him to his feet and to consciousness.

"Oh, ah, indeed, of course!" stammered the terrified sleeper. "Well, well, ah!—Shadow. Glad to see you. Pleasant joke; but rather startling. Honesty compels me —exceedingly startling."

"I'm thinkin' yer'll find it summat that way afore I'm done with yer," announced Shadow, reassuringly. "If I remembers correct, I've warned yer more nor once not to make a certain subject the staple of yer gab. Ain't I?"

"Yes, yes, of course, without doubt," again sputtered Mr. Slack, trembling in every nerve. "Your memory serves you aright. I hope there has nothing happened or transpired."

"Yer better hope as nuthin' ain't a-goin' to happen now, yer sneakin' little hound! Yer knows very well what's happened. Yer knows as well as I what yer've gone and done. Yer've blabbed about that there matter in spite of what I told yer. I suppose yer thought I wouldn't hear on it, and that I wouldn't dare to tech yer if I did. Well, yer'll find consider'ble different."

Shadow's menacing words and manner as he spoke thus, holding his little victim facing him, while they caused Mr. Slack to turn white with terror, and fairly stupefied the dull Paulina, served to arouse also the childish dread of "the Diverter," who forthwith began to howl most dismally.

"Hush that kid's bawl, yer!" cried Shadow, addressing the wife and mother. "Put her in that room, d'yer hear?"

"Oblige the gentleman, Paulina," put in Mr. Slack, his quivering voice playing traitor to his attempted tone of composure, "oblige the gentleman, of course. Put the child in the bedroom. Do as he directs."

"Never mind yer obligin'," observed Shadow. "It won't save yer hide. Yes, it's yer hide I'm after, and it's yer hide I'll have!"

The powerful rogue here drew from under his coat a stout whipstock and flourished it vengefully before Mr. Slack's dancing eyes.

"You don't mean—you can't mean—it's impossible! You can't intend——"

"Yer'll see whether I kin or not. Oh, yer've come yer gabbin' act long enough. Yer allers war too glib fur yer own good. Kids like yer ought'er be seen and not heard so infernally much. I'll give yer one lesson as yer won't forgit afore to-morrow, leastwise."

Poor little Mr. Slack was trembling like a frightened hare.

"Hold on, Shadow!" he pleaded. "I take it back—I repent completely. Hold on—a minute of time! We've always been friends. Hold on! We'll make terms. I've got cash. I was imprudent—I realize it fully. Terms—Cash!"

Mr. Slack's terrified deprecations were of no avail. Even while he yet spoke the remorseless villain, still holding the collar in his left hand, sat quietly down in the chair beside him, bent the little fellow over his left knee, as a father his child, and pressing his right knee tightly against him held him in position. Then his powerful right hand seized the whipstock and raised it in the air. Mr. Slack seeing it about to fall veritably seemed to shrink away into a still smaller compass within his plethoric garments, and again called out for terms and mercy. All to no purpose. The pitiless whip rose and fell in quick and vehement succession. Mr. Slack writhed and squirmed in vain, and, to make his discomfiture complete, while his castigation was in progress, certain of his numerous neighbors, attracted by his outcries, poked their heads in at the door.

"Gude!" screamed Mrs. Tafferty in rare glee. "Will yez hear that! Gude enough for him. Make him talk as he niver talked afore. Give it till him till he's clane sphoke out, and thin we may have a minute's pace. Ach! ye little argufyer, yer a-argufyin' now if yez niver did afore. Lay it on, gint, kape it oop!"

"Gee whiz!" exclaimed a small brother of the O'Brien brat. "This here beats Fort o'July all holler! Gosh! but

you'm a regular Roming candle. Great horn-spoons, how you kin yell! You spits it out like a sky-rocket. My guy! but you'd make a good fire-alarm wid practice."

A third spectator was about offering some observation on the likelihood of their stuck-up little neighbor being divided into apartments for certain at last, when Shadow, having applied the rod to his complete satisfaction, made a rush at the door and all hands precipitately withdrew.

"Now!" he said, returning to Mr. Slack, who, with an agonized expression of countenance, was utilizing both hands in preventing his garments from irritating the stinging wales beneath them. "Now, I've taught yer a lesson as yer can't possibly furgit fur some time—not till yer cloes sets easier, leastwise. But afore I goes, I wants to say a few words to yer fur yer own good. Yer knows where yer cash is comin' from. I don't mean by this little diwersion we've been enjoyin' that yer ain't to git none from that same place. I'd ruthor yer would nor not. Bleed him all yer kin. What I do mean is that yer've got to mind how yer talks too free when ye're sober and when ye're drunk. And I means if yer ever should be such a fool as to take it into yer head to blab, it ain't likely as yer could prove what yer knows, and when I war let off, I'd hunt yer out if yer war in yer last hole, and I'd croak yer as dead as a dog. D'yer hear, Lawyer?"

Mr. Slack, though considerably distracted by his late flagellation, heard very distinctly and so admitted.

"Then I'll chuck yer a good-day. And I'll leave this here little gad with yer to freshen yer memory."

Bringing his visit to a forcible close, by hurling the whipstock with no pleasant impact against his victim's legs, Shadow took his departure. No sooner had his retreating footsteps died away down the rickety stairs, than Mr. Slack's manner underwent a visible change. Forgetting, for the moment, his physical pains in his acute mental distress at having been made such a ridiculous spectacle in the eyes of his better half, he felt it incumbent upon him to re-establish her husband and lord in his lost

prestige. Moreover, his hot anger being utterly impotent to vent itself upon its rightful prey, in full accord with his nature, sought an outlet upon the unoffending person of his spouse.

"Paulina!" he cried, "you great awkward blunderbuss, why didn't you call the police? Why didn't you interfere with that villain, you dumb, gawky lunk-head! Are you the woman I've honored with my name? Are you the female upon whom I have bestowed my wealth, and lately raised to ladyhood? Are you? I say you're a perverse blockhead, and I'll teach you to have a little manners about you! I'll let you know who's your husband!"

As he spoke, Mr. Slack valorously clutched Shadow's cudgel, and rushing upon his wife, bestowed upon her in addition to the favors already mentioned, sundry lusty blows about the hands, arms, and head. When his spleen had cooled and he considered himself again safely established in her proper regard, he followed Shadow's example by hurling the whipstock savagely at his wife's head. These lovely demonstrations ended, he threw himself face downwards in his warm corner, and as the blue ridges that traversed his person like ribs on a wash-board, gave forth each one its particular quota of pain, he groaned and lamented dismally. Not finding it convenient to visit Lawyer Hardangle that evening, and by no means agreeable to assume a sitting posture, he retained his chosen attitude until bedtime, and then, taking a strong draught, crept into bed. Mr. Slack's day had arrived.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### MURDER WILL OUT.

"WELL, Moll, my girl!" exclaimed Josey Applegate as that strong-headed and good-hearted female walked into his apartments upon the evening of the day whose dawn found Mr. Silas Slack still face-downward on his couch, "I'm glad to see you. Doll and me was just starting for The People's Hall. That there Maitland fellow is a kind of second John the Baptist. I was saying to Doll just before you came in, what a good thing it would be if he could get a whack at that little Slack chap. Maybe then he'd come and pay up."

"Pay up!" repeated Molly disdainfully. "You couldn't touch him with fifty Baptizers. There may be some hope of salvation for the regular out-and-outers, but for mean, sneaking little hypocrites like him, there's no hope in this world or the next. I've heard a good deal about Mr. Philip's Hall and we'll all go together."

The little party was soon on its way. Arrived at the Hall, they found assembled a motley gathering of perhaps two hundred people, whose numbers and the wonderful stillness which reigned, bespoke the deep and widespread interest which Philip's hard winter's work had awakened. Men and women deep sunk in the foul quagmires of a great city, had been aroused from bestiality to the realization that there was something within them higher than the poor brutes of the street; that death followed life with grim certainty, and that after the grave came another life. In a word, beings conscious only of bodies had suddenly come into the possession of souls. It was a sight to make one pause and consider.

Josey and his two ladies having arrived late a hymn was just finishing as they entered, and as they were ushered to their seats, Philip Maitland, with a countenance evincing extreme weariness and solicitude, rose to speak. Laborious and unsparing as his work had been, it was not wholly his philanthropic yearnings and unremitting zeal which rendered his face so white and anxious. The terrific scene in Rachel Underwood's apartments which he had been called upon to witness, together with all its attendant horrors, had given his nature a severe shock. With a significance, therefore, which his auditors little guessed, he announced as his theme the words: "Be sure your sin will find you out." It is not the purpose of this narrative to enter into the details of the urgent discourse which followed. It concerns itself only to set forth that there is something in the Great Love when portrayed by its reflection in the human, that has power to melt and to mould the hardest heart; that, with the late awful scene vividly before his mental vision, and with a potency born only of a spirit on fire with love and devotion, and refined by a life of unswerving self-immolation, the speaker for half-an-hour's time swayed his audience to his will; and that, when his pricking words had died away, at least a quarter of his strange hearers responded to the invitation extended to all those who desired to talk with him more privately, to step forward near the platform.

"If that's all the truth," said Molly, who had been deeply impressed, "I'm going up, too,"

It was quite a shock to Molly's rather self-righteous disposition to find herself in the close society of dirty and unkempt men and women whom Philip's tireless endeavors had dragged from the tenements and low groggeries of the slums. She would have preferred a religion a little less democratic in its tendencies. But when she discovered to her great astonishment that the occupant of the seat directly before her was no other than the man upon whom her suspicions so strongly rested in the matter of her cat's disappearance, it was almost more

than she could endure. However, the impression upon her mind was too profound to be thus dispelled, and she gave Philip strict heed while he spoke tenderly to the poor creatures before him, answering their crude inquiries with patient sympathy, and infusing hope and purpose into darkened and drifting souls. At length the individual who had fallen under Molly's suspicions spoke out in his turn.

"Reverend," he said, "I've allers been a perty rum one, and I ain't stopped short at nothin' whatsomever. I've been a reg'lar down-easter and out-and-outer. Been a pickpocket and a sneak-thief by turns. But if what you've been a spoutin's the real thing, I go in for it. Now, look here. That's Bumpo's. Bumpo's my trick monkey. I hooked that there gew-gaw off of a feller, and Bumpo's wore it ever since round his neck. But look here: I'm going to let you have the say about it to show as I means biz and go in for this thing. That's the only bit I've got of all I ever stole." (Molly twisted uneasily round in her seat.) "Except, which sounds kind o' queer, a old gray cat. I've trained her into a good actin' cat along of Bumpo, and she's worth dollars to me; but I know where she belongs, and to-morrow I'm going' to trot her back. Now, you kin see as I means biz."

When the little after-gathering broke up, Philip and Molly made a simultaneous advance upon the monkey-trainer; but the housekeeper owing to superiority of position and to the fact that the man immediately recognized her as the rightful owner of his illicit feline possession, first claimed his attention.

"I'd have had you arrested and sent up if I could have found you before," Molly began, "but now, seeing we're both in the same boat, and you're sorry for having done it and were going to bring her back, you'll get off without your real deserts. But tell me quick: how is Mary—the cat, I mean?"

"She's just the same as ever," replied the man, "only she's a power more knowin.'"

"And she's got all her fur on, and you haven't banged her round and broke her legs, nor cut her ears?"

"I did snip a piece out of each ear," confessed the purloiner.

"What!" cried Molly. "Snipped her ears! Cut a piece out of each of Mary's ears in cold blood! And you trying to make a Christian out of yourself! You're a cruel, unfeeling wretch! I'll have you arrested by the Cruelty Society. For shame! But there—I forgot. We're in the same boat: you took me so sudden-like. I suppose I ought to forgive you. Anyway I won't have you taken up, after all. We must go and get Mary right off. Were you going to speak to him, Mr. Maitland?"

"I was going to ask a few questions," rejoined Philip. "So this is the woman whose cat you stole?"

"She's the very one, Reverend."

"Well, that is a queer coincidence! But what I wanted to talk about a little was that button which you say your monkey wears around his neck. Would you mind telling me where you got it? It ought to be returned to its rightful owner as well as the cat."

"Where did I light onto that there, Reverend? I'll tell you just the spot. I was a-comin' by a saloon what lets on to be the Side Pocket, and, as I was goin' along I heerd a pretty tall racket brewin' inside, so I just peeped into the winder to have a look at the fun. Well, I see a a little chap up in a chair a spoutin' away like a fool, and I see him take this here gew-gaw outen his pocket and hold it up to be gaped at. So, bein' a perty good hand at such little games, I just waits around till he comes out half-seas-over, and I goes up to him and I lifts up his pocket and I snibbies onto his little ornyment. That's the how, Reverend."

Philip Maitland was not unacquainted with the locality of the Side Pocket.

"And could you go to the Pocket with me and point out the little man if he was there?"

"I allow I could, Reverend. But the reason I guv it

to you to have the say about instead of tryin' to git it back to that same little chap, was because I didn't reckon as it was his in the start. Such gay things ain't just in such a feller's line. But just as you say, Reverend."

"I think we had better go. Where do you live?"

"I hangs out five blocks beyant the Pocket, and then you turns up one block."

"Then we'll step round to the saloon to-night, if you're willing. And Molly, if you want to get your cat, you can accompany us and we'll walk on to his lodgings afterwards. Are those your friends waiting for you at the door?"

Mrs. Humstone, who had listened to the foregoing conversation with an ever-deepening interest, and with a most unpleasant sensation of complicity in some burglary which was about to be ferreted out and exposed (for she had immediately recognized the jewelled button as the one which the little monkey had displayed to her on Lawyer Hardangle's window-sill, and as the mate to the pin which Dolly at that moment was wearing in her neck), Mrs. Humstone answered in the affirmative. A few minutes later her mutual acquaintances had been made known to each other, and the whole party were on their way towards the Pocket, Philip and the young criminal taking the lead. On the way Philip inquired his companion's name.

"Well, Reverend," he replied, "if you had a-asked me two hours ago, I'd have told you William Otway; but now as I means biz and go in fur the thing, it's William Underwood."

"Underwood!" exclaimed Philip. "Did you ever have a sister Rachel?"

"Now that's down queer! That there's the third time somebody's been at me about my sister. Yes, Reverend. Seein' I'm goin' in, I say I did have a sister what went by that name. But I hain't been home in a dooced long time and I don't know whether I've got her yet or not. Did you know her, Reverend?"

"Yes. I knew her," answered Philip. "She used to work for a friend of mine. No, Mr. Underwood, you have not got her now. I saw a notice of her death in the paper the other day."

William Underwood evinced no great emotion at this announcement: Philip had not expected he would. His life had not been one to foster sentiment. However, his reply did him some credit.

"Rach were a perty lookin' gal," he said. "But I took bad early and ain't seen her in years. So she's done, hey? Well, I wouldn't a-minded her knowin' that I was goin' in fur this thing, afore she went."

The Side Pocket was removed from the Hall by something less than a mile. In the course of fifteen minutes Philip and William Underwood came to a stand in front of its screen-protected doors. Bidding Josey and his two ladies walk slowly on in the direction of his guide's lodgings, Philip entered the saloon, having first cautioned his companion to make no sign of their mission there. The pickpocket looked unconcernedly about him, and then whispered:

"That there's the chap standin' over there leanin' on the bar. Why don't he set down like the rest of 'em?"

Philip turned his eyes in the direction indicated, and to his astonishment they rested on the well-known features of Mr. Silas Slack.

"That little fellow?" he inquired again, to be sure there was no mistake.

"That same, Reverend. I told you he wasn't no chap fur such gay things. He was a-standin' crackin' it off in a chippy's voice, and when he'd got good and done and put out for home, I worked him for a sucker."

The missionary, having accomplished all he desired for the present, led the way out of the saloon, just as Mr. Slack, who had recognized both parties, was approaching to speak with them. Outside the door, William Underwood inquired:

"I thought you was a-goin' to give it to him, Reverend.

You didn't want him to know we was lookin' his way. Is there any game about it, Reverend? Did you ever see Bumpo's scarf-pin afore?"

"I think I have," replied Philip. "If I am not mistaken it belonged to a friend of mine. I shall have the matter looked into. Your honesty in giving it up may lead to important results. Let us hurry and overtake our friends."

The three advance members of the party were soon overtaken; but Philip, instead of accompanying them to William Underwood's lodgings, excused himself and bidding them good-night, took his leave. He had no sooner gone than Molly took her place for the remainder of the walk by the side of the man who had snipped Mary's ears, Josey and Dolly following them.

"What happened in the saloon?" she asked abruptly.

"That there ain't no such a question as I oughter answer," replied William Underwood.

"Did you find the man you robbed it from?" persisted Molly.

"Perhaps as we did and perhaps as we didn't."

"Then I know you did. What is going to be done about it? Did Mr. Maitland give up the button?"

"You better ask him, I'm thinkin'."

"I know he didn't. Did he say he'd ever seen it before?"

"I don't recollect as he allowed to have seen it behind."

"Why didn't he want you to tell?"

"That there ain't a proper question for one as is goin' in."

Mrs. Humstone felt the rebuke, and by the time she had acknowledged it their destination had been reached. When a light was made, Mary and Bumpo were discovered snuggled closely together on a piece of old carpet in one corner of the room.

The pickpocket aroused his pets and removed from Mary's neck the collar by which she was chained to the wall, and restored the old gray to the arms of her rightful possessor. The rescued pussy, as Molly afterwards stoutly

affirmed, purred a distinct thanksgiving and rolled up her great green eyes suffused with tears. Mrs. Humstone's joy would have been complete had it not been for the snipped ears.

"You poor dear!" she exclaimed. "Did he cut them and pay no attention to your cries and spoil your looks? It was a wicked shame! But then, Mary-lady, you're getting on in years now and your marrying days are about over; so it won't mar your prospects—that's one comfort. I forgive you, young man, seeing we are both in the same boat, and I suppose I thank you for giving it away that you had her. Come, Josey and Dolly."

The grocer and his wife said good-night and Molly led the way out of the house. Being the first to reach the sidewalk, she faced about while her companions made their somewhat slower way out of the hall and down the four steps to the pavement. As she did so what should she see gleaming into her eyes in the light of the flickering gas, but Dolly's pin.

"What on earth did you loosen your cloak for and give that fellow a chance to see it!" she cried with a vehemence which quite startled her inoffensive sister.

"Why, what!" cried Dolly quite aghast. "Was there any danger? I got too warm walking. Have I done wrong? What is it, Molly?"

"There, there, now," interposed Josey in a soothing tone. "Don't you go and get nervy and excited, old girl. It's only her notion about your pin having once been stole."

"No, it ain't," stoutly persisted Molly. "There was a reason. I ought to have thought. Still, I don't know as there was any helping what I've always said was sure to come. I suppose you'd have had to tell by good right any way. But wait till we get home and I'll tell you all about how I've seen the mate of it this very night."

Meanwhile Philip Maitland had returned to the Hall and thrown himself down in his office-chair to think. He had recognized Bumpo's scarf-pin as one of the pair of

sleeve-buttons which Reginald Moreland had habitually worn since the death of his first wife's only son, William. There had been something almost superstitious in Mr. Moreland's passionate attachment to this last gift to his beloved son, and on no account would he leave his home without them. Philip, therefore, was very confident that they must have formed part of the attire of the doomed man upon the fatal night of his disappearance. Here, then, was what might prove to be the first link in a chain of events to whose final link might be found attached some dark villain besides Bags. Detective Sargeant's theory had been shrewd, yet here might be a clue which would put quite another aspect upon the whole dark mystery. It ought to be investigated without delay. Philip was just concluding that his proper course of procedure was to lay the whole matter before the murdered man's son, when he was aroused by a knock at the street-door. What was his surprise upon opening it to see before him—William Underwood.

"I say, Reverend," panted that individual, "I ve got a pointer. A reg'lar down good one. It's a great game. I say, Reverend, I've seen the mate to it—I've seen the t'other ornyment!"

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Philip.

"Yes, Reverend, I've seen nuthin' more nor less. If any two ornyments is mates in this world or the next—I've seen two gewgaws as is mates this night."

"Go on, man, go on!" cried Philip, much excited.

"That's just what I'm here fur," returned William Underwood. "You knows that there other one—that Applepie woman. What's her name? Apple—Apple"——

"Applegate," prompted Philip.

"Applegate—that's the ticket. That there red-faced one's old woman. Well, they all come along to my harbor and the old lady she'd been a-walkin' too smart for one of her size, and had got all het up. Well, she throwed open her fixin's and I didn't let on a wink but, by thunder (excuse me, Reverend: I'm goin' in just the same), what

did my two eyes light onto but the mate to that there scarf-pin of Bump's I guv you this very evenin'! Fact, Reverend, fact."

"Are you sure you might not have been mistaken?"

"Plumb certain. Never see a pin a smitch like Bump's till I see that there one. It's a odd figger, Reverend. Had it stuck in her neck fur a breast-pin."

Philip thanked his informant for his caution in hiding his discovery and for his kindness in taking the trouble to return to the Hall with it. Then, saying he was very desirous of seeing his brother-in-law that night, bade William Underwood good-night and started for his sister's home.

"God knows how I hate to enter the house!" he said to himself, as he stepped from the car. "I don't feel as if I could ever look either of them in the face again. Worse than all, I've not seen either of them since, at her request, I left them on the street that awful night. Thank God for her letter, and that it isn't quite as bad as I thought at first. Yet how unspeakably awful it is! Why must it have been? It is hideous, hideous! Poor Robert! poorer Florence! Well, there must be some first time, and perhaps the strange and startling story I have to tell will make the meeting a little less awkward. At all events the thing must be done and I'll do it."

With these bitter thoughts for his company the reluctant Philip reached his destination and was admitted by the butler. Entering the library unannounced, he found Robert and Florence in their accustomed places; and, had he not been conversant with the dark history of the past few days he would have observed nothing to arouse his suspicions. As it was, the two faces that were turned towards him as he entered, produced within him a cruel, almost overpowering sensation of heart-sickness. Florence, woman-like, assumed a forced sprightliness as she caught sight of her brother.

"Why, Robert," she exclaimed, "here's Phil!"

"Yes, here I am," said Philip, returning his sister's kiss,

though not without noting the extreme effort she put forth to hide her painful agitation; "here I am," he repeated, plunging at once into his subject without awaiting a reply to his "How are you, Bob?" that he might quiet his own unsteady nerves, and temper as much as possible the unpleasantness of the situation, "and upon a most astonishing and perhaps momentous business. See here, Bob: did you ever see that before? I know where the mate to it is."

"My God!" exclaimed Robert. "It's father's sleeve-button! And you know where the other one is? What of them, Phil, what of them?"

This history knows full well all Philip then knew respecting the discoveries that had come to him, and it were quite a work of supererogation to set down here the particular form in which he told his story. Suffice it to say that when he had done, Robert immediately announced his decision to place the button with its history and the easy method of finding its mate through Molly Humstone, in the hands of detective Sargeant at headquarters early next morning.

"And Sargeant will recognize it," Robert continued. "He had a full description of father's dress that fatal night, from mother and me the next morning. About the buttons, I'll tell you, Phil. You know how passionately attached to them father was; how he would never go ten steps from home and leave them behind. He loved Will more, I think, than he ever loved any one else, and his partiality for those buttons amounted almost to a mania. Well, mother told Sargeant that morning that father had taken them with him though he had not worn them. He had come home, as you know, later than usual and somewhat out of sorts, and found dinner waiting his return. Hardangle's note lay on the hall-table, and when he had read it he asked that the meal be served immediately as he did not wish to fall behind the hour indicated, having never in his life been behindhand at any appointment. His toilet not having been made, mother called

his attention to the soiled condition of his linen. 'The collar's good enough for Hardangle,' he replied shortly, 'but the cuffs aren't befitting my Will's memory.' With that he removed the cuffs and threw them aside, but the buttons he slipped into his vest-pocket. Yes, Sargeant will recognize them. Of Slack's coming into possession of his, it is, as you say, easy to form a theory. A hole in the pocket might do for that. But of the other one—that's the question. However Sargeant can easily learn the man's whereabouts from his sister and then we shall find out all that can be discovered."

Philip did not prolong his visit, making the lateness of the hour his excuse. Robert accompanied him to the door.

"Phil," he said with great emotion, "I can't talk about it now. Some time, if you haven't come to despise and hate me, I want to."

Philip took his friend's hand in his and said in a broken voice :

"All we like sheep have gone astray."

He laid the emphasis upon the first little word, and Robert returned to his wife in tears. That night a new heart entered Robert Moreland's breast, and thenceforth he chose duty before inclination. The angels set another star in Philip's crown ere he slept, and its radiance seemed to shine with cheer into his sister's soul. For the old clock on the stairs struck three before the overwrought and repentant Robert had poured forth all his full heart, and when his wife gave thanks before she sought repose, there was one strain which echoed through it all :

"And I thank Thee that our love may yet be, if not the same, yet even richer than it was before."

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### MRS. APPLEGATE IS NERVY.

THE hour of ten on the following morning, saw Joseph Applegate and his artless spouse busily at work in their little grocery. The husband was systematically disposing the contents of a bulky consignment of eatables which had just arrived : his helpmeet, having already burnished and refilled three kerosene lamps, was lustily applying the blacking-brush to the stove which occupied the centre of the room.

"I wish you'd take that pin to the Hall and give it to Mr. Maitland before you do any more," urged the apprehensive wife.

"There, there, now, old girl, don't you be keeping yourself thinking about that pin," rejoined Josey, puffing under a load of tomato-cans. "That pin's all right. It'll do to go any time to-day."

"Yes, but Josey," persisted the anxious Dorothy, "do recollect all Molly told us last night. The police may be looking us up this minute for anything we know ; and it would be so much better to give it up of your own accord, than be forced to."

"Now, now, Doll, now, now!" returned her partner. "There's precious little danger of their coming here to-day. If I hadn't a mind to give it up, it ain't at all unlikely I'd never hear another word about it. That monkey-fellow most probable ain't spied your pin at all. Besides, there ain't no certainty that he'd feel called upon to go and tell about it if he did see it ; though things being as they are, I suppose it's supposable. No, no, they won't come here to-day, old girl, and I must get this cargo stowed away right before I leave off."

"But then they might come, Josey. Those detectives are such a creepy, insinuating sort. The first thing you know —why, there they are."

The words were still upon Dolly's tongue when the street-door opened and an individual quite ordinarily dressed (save that the soles of his shoes were unusually thick), and, in spite of a very determined expression of countenance, looking as if he were about to expend a few cents in provisions for the sustenance of the body, entered the store.

"Good-morning to you, sir," said Josey. "What can I do for you to-day?"

"Good-morning," returned the stranger. "Nice day for the first of March."

"I suppose it may be," returned the proprietor, "but to tell the truth I haven't been outside enough to have a right to an opinion. Is there any thing you'd like to have, sir, on the first of March?"

"I'll have a cigar," answered the determined-looking stranger, "a strong one for a nickel."

The cigar was forthcoming, and the stranger immediately lighted it.

"I think I've never been in here before," he remarked, looking casually all about the place. "You're as snug as a pair of nippers here, ain't you?"

"We think it's pretty cosy, me and Doll," responded the grocer.

"Cosy's the word," assented the stranger. "You say Doll: I don't see him. Is he your clerk?"

Josey laughed aloud.

"Doll my clerk!" he exclaimed. "That's a good one. A man must be as mad's a hare in the present month to think my wife's my clerk—no offence to you, sir. I say, Doll, he thought you was my errand boy. You couldn't run *very* fast, could you?"

"Oh," said the stranger. "Excuse me, Mr. Applegate. So that lady's your wife. That's it—and very nice it is, too. You both put in your share of work here, I see. Excellent cigar."

Here he took several full puffs, glancing the while with easy indifference towards the grocer's better-half, but none the less directing his eyes more particularly at the neck of her dress.

"If you like 'em, I'd be glad to sell you another," suggested the wily Josey.

"I do like them and I will take another," said the obliging stranger.

As he spoke, he thrust his hand into his pantaloons pocket in search of the required nickel, and seemingly at least, by mistake, drew forth with his change a little jeweled sleeve button.

"Gad!" he exclaimed, evidently quite disturbed by what he had done. "I guess I'd better mind my P's and Q's a little better than that. I wouldn't just care about hauling that little snake out of my pocket in some localities, least of all near any police station. But of course I don't need mind it here : you're all so good and friendly. There's a pretty dark story gathers around that little button and it wouldn't be too safe to give the detectives a smell of it. Why, what's the matter, Mr. Applegate?"

"What!" exclaimed Josey, his eyes as big as saucers. "Are you a flatty? That chap did tell then. And, Doll, you were right, after all. There now, old girl, don't take on so and get all excited and nervy."

"Why this commotion?" asked the stranger, who was of course none other than detective Sargeant, "why this commotion?"

"Don't charge him with it!" pleaded Dolly vehemently. "He was going to take it as soon as he finished putting things to their places. Indeed he was, sir. He didn't know anything about it till last night. I've lived with him forty years, and I never knew him to do a single trick yet."

"What's the matter, my dear woman?" demanded Mr. Sargeant. "What was he going to take?"

"It, it!—the button!" cried Dolly. "Don't arrest him, sir! He never robbed a penny in his whole life!"

"Don't, Doll, don't," interposed the grocer. "Nobody's going to take me up. You know, sir, as well as her you're asking (no offence to you, sir), what she means. You've heard all about it and how we've got the mate to that one you've got. It's in my pocket now. I was going to to take it to Mr. Maitland in an hour's time. Here it is."

"You're cool enough," observed the man of many devices. "Yes, I know the whole story, and I say you're plenty cool. Perhaps you can explain to me how such things as this find their way into a grocer's. Do they belong to the sweetmeat line and come in prize packages?'

"Oh, I see, you don't understand that, do you?" rejoined Josey. "Of course not. Just let me tell you that it ain't no prize package business whatsoever. If you'll listen, I'll tell you all about my getting that pin which once was a sleeve-button."

This he did in a truthful, straightforward manner. Even before he had finished, a gleam of triumphant intelligence overspread the officer's face.

"So you used to be a cabby, did you?" he remarked, when Josey had assured him that "that was all." "That's the way of it. I see it now. Yes, yes."

"And you believe him?" ventured Dolly, fearfully.

"That's another matter, Mrs. Grocer," answered the detective.

"Don't speak that way to her!" interrupted Josey with unusual severity. "Her name's Applegate."

"Oh, I beg you won't make anybody angry on my account!" pleaded Dolly. "I don't care how anybody calls me."

"Well, well, no harm intended," remarked the representative of justice, quite admiring the grocer's sturdy manhood, which would have been ample proof, had evidence been needed, of his entire innocence. "Yes, I believe him, Mrs. Applegate. And so we'll talk straight out. I presume, sir, you do not know whom that button belonged to?"

"If I had, I ain't the man to have kept it, sir," returned Josey.

"Well, it belonged to a man who disappeared under very strange circumstances," continued Mr. Sargeant, "His name was Moreland."

"Moreland!" cried Josey in supreme astonishment. "What do you say, sir? Not Reginald Moreland!"

"That same, sir. You seem to know him: did you ever have dealings with him?"

"I'm pretty certain I did. If I'm not much mistaken, I drove him and a lawyer to Water Street in my cab, on the very night of his murder."

"As I supposed. And that was the way the button came into your hands."

"Oh, Josey, Josey, ain't it terrible!" moaned Dolly.

"So you're the man that drove them, hey?" continued the man from headquarters, evidently little accustomed to give great heed to women's woes. "If I hadn't found out about that murder as I did, you'd have had a call from me long before this. But the lawyer gave you a good name, and any way I struck on the right clue without you. Let's see: you drove them to McAuley's mission—I knew that, and that's all I'd have discovered if I had come."

"That's all I could have told you, sir. Except, to be sure, that after I'd put the old hoss to roost for the night, as I was coming along home on one side of the street—Water Street, I mean—I see them again walking on the other side of the way, each with an officer for company."

Detective Sargeant was on the point of doing his share in that morning's exclamations, but his years of practice prevented him. His former clue, of which he was so confident, was rapidly vanishing.

"Mrs. Applegate," he said, quietly, "I want you to listen while I ask your husband to state that last about the officers again."

"Oh, I'd rather not!" demurred Dolly, terrified afresh by Mr. Sargeant's ominous manner. "It wouldn't be any

good to take me to court, sir, cause I wouldn't swear nothing that was going to be against Josey."

"If it's ever going to be anything, it will be in his favor," rejoined Mr. Sargeant. "So just listen while he repeats it. Now, sir, will you just say that over again?"

Josey repeated his former words, his wife listening as if he were pronouncing his own irrevocable doom.

"And now tell me all you can about them," said the detective.

"I don't know as I've got anything to tell," returned Josey.

"How were they as to size? Did you notice that?"

"Well, I don't know but what I did. If I remember, one was pretty middling tall and the other was considerable shorter."

"Of course, of course!" ejaculated Mr. Sargeant.

"What about them?" inquired the grocer, growing interested.

"Two suits of officer's clothes about a pair of rogues. Also a couple of life-preservers," blindly responded the other. "Excellent cigar. I forgot to pay for it. Good-day."

Detective Sargeant, with grim triumph in his eye, laid a nickel on the showcase and left the store, saying within himself:

"Yes, Mr. Lawyer, we fellows *do* suspect everybody. So you were both powerful men and didn't need an officer? By Wash Walling! I was fooled for once. You were a cool one and your Shadow a cute one. Your daring course is run."

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### MR. SARGEANT ON THE SCENT.

THE soft fingers of the night had closed the drowsy eyelids of another day, and the myriad stars had let down to earth their cold, narrow pathways of light. Mr. Slack, having returned from a lucrative visit to Lawyer Hardangle's office, had finished his evening meal and was now slowly sipping his final cup of tea.

"Paulina," he remarked, at this interesting juncture, "shall you ever be able to look me in the face again after your reprehensible behavior and disgusting dumbness of day before yesterday?"

"Silas surely is quite right," murmured the wooden and emotionless Paulina.

"Give over such sapless exhibitions of moon-calfery!" vehemently vociferated Mr. Slack. "Stop whining there like a whipped poodle, and behave yourself like the wife of a man—an honest man. Such actions would be fitting the wife of the villain who came in here with a whip to brow-beat and intimidate a man on one memorable occasion proven to be brave and valorous. He thought he could make a man whimper like a spanked baby, but he reckoned without his host. Come, now, female, speak out like a decent and reputable person. Do you expect ever again to look me squarely in the eye after your disgraceful exhibitions of cowardice and inaction?"

"Silas surely told her to do the gentleman's bidding. She certainly thought you did not intend her to anger the gentleman."

"Gentleman!" cried Mr. Slack. "Do you have the effrontery to call him a gentleman to my very face?

Paulina, you great loot, do you want me to thrust you out of my apartments?"

"Silas surely said gentleman."

"Keep your trap closed before I beat you!" fairly shrieked Mr. Silas Slack. "I call that fellow a gentleman! I called him the villain he was, and that to his face. I hurled my epithets into his very teeth, and dared him to do his worst. Do you add insult to injury? Were you not a woman, and naturally entitled therefore to tender consideration and respect; and were it not that my honesty compels me to adhere to my foolhardy marriage vows, I tell you, you should hump. But, Paulina, listen, and give heed. In spite of such an ungrateful return for the many favors I have showered upon you, I curb my anger and master my inclination to put you into the street. I have lately made youa lady, my dear. I have gained the goal towards which I have so long been urging the steeds of my brain. I heap coals of fire upon your dull and stupid head. And now, as I depart, I bestow upon you a proof of my continued favor and your achieved ladyship. Take it, Paulina: appropriate it freely. It is not begrudged. Good-bye, my dears. Hold your several breaths and wonder at your mother's good fortune."

And Mr. Silas Slack with infinite condescension slipped a dime down the neck of his wife's evening-dress, and took his departure. His destination was the residence of his sister Mag, whither in due season he arrived. Madame Guillon was seated at her desk when he entered.

"Maggie, my girl," he cried, as he caught sight of her, "how are you?"

"None the better for seeing you!" returned the Madame, shortly.

"Why, what is wrong, Maggie, my girl?"

"Here then," replied Madame Guillon, thrusting a letter which was lying open on the desk beside her into her brother's hands. "I got that only a little while before you came in, in answer to one I sent yesterday."

The letter which Mr. Slack proceeded to read was in

Florence Moreland's handwriting, and set forth in unmistakable terms that the wife of Robert Moreland would hand over to the authorities any further communications from Madame Guillon, and immediately institute a prosecution for black-mail.

"Highty-tighty!" exclaimed Mr. Slack, when he had finished. "So, ho! Then we're done in that quarter, Maggie."

"Yes, we're done, if nothing worse!" snapped his sister. "So you needn't come here about that Moreland one any more. He gave up so easy that the child hasn't been needed for proof anyway."

"But you forget and don't recollect, Mag. You were to tap the kid when it became a man, and put on a little streak of fat with his hush-money."

"None of that, Silas. That won't do, you scheming knave. It was his mother who was to raise him in the world. You don't know she's dead. Oh, no! You'd tell me that very quick, wouldn't you?"

"Well, well, Mag, you're awake yet, I see. But for once you're too smart and keen. The kid is in the same good family he's been in all along, and they will keep and nourish him just the same whether they're paid for it or not. We're all right as far as the kid goes. By the way, my girl, how much was your last and latest levy on Moreland?"

"Five hundred, Silas. I suppose, being it's the first of the month, you've come for your commission."

"I guess and surmise I have. But first I would just like to know how much you've taken out of that chap's hide to pay him for his little game."

"You would. Well, I'll tell you. I reckoned it up after I got that letter. In all $2500. But if it hadn't been for that cursed woman, next year I'd have gone $500 better."

"Oh, you Mag! You are a brick—you're a whole brick-row. Talk about founding a prayer-meeting! Why, you keep a little private hell here that beats all prayer-meetings hollow. And now, Maggie, while you count up and

reckon my little dues on my three cases, I'll just stretch my limbs on this soothing sofa and snooze half-an-hour or so."

When Mr. Slack arose, the French clock on the mantel was striking eight, and the French Madame was hungrily devouring a French novel. The little man, having somewhat overslept, bustled up from his comfortable couch, counted over the money which his sister had placed for him on the table beside her, and signified his intention of departing forthwith in the direction of his favorite saloon.

"Yes, Maggie," he said, as he stood with his hat on his head and his hand on the knob, "you beat all the prayer-shops. And remember, when you're planted I'm to stand at the foot and say: 'The deuce she has!'"

Mr. Slack shuffled out through the kitchen and was gone. He had accomplished so much of his journey as lay between his sister's home and Chatham Square, when his path was crossed by two individuals who had just emerged from the vile purlieus of Mulberry Bend. Seeing, Mr. Slack recognized the features of detective Sargeant: hearing, he caught the words: "Shadow and Hardangle may be——" Seeing and hearing thus, although he was utterly at a loss to imagine what had come to pass that these two names should be thus coupled together, he immediately hit upon a conclusion and a plan of action. The conclusion was that Mr. Sargeant and his colleague were bound for The Pocket to secure the person of the dreaded Shadow: the plan of action, to proceed at once to the saloon and warn Shadow, if he were there, of the near approach of the detectives, and then to repair immediately to the lawyer's dwelling and apprise him also of what he had overheard. Mr. Slack was prompted to this course by politic considerations. He realized all too clearly for perfect peace of mind, that his own livelihood was probably in peril. If the guilty secret was known, his leverage was gone. However, even if the suspicions of the authorities were aroused, the evidence might be only partially conclusive, and the sooner both the guilty parties were warned of

the impending danger, the better for his monetary prospects. He therefore set out with all possible dispatch to put his plan of action into effect. As he had anticipated, the brawny ruffian was seated dully smoking before The Pocket fire. Quite pale and exhausted from running, Mr. Slack dashed into the saloon and panted into his ear :

"The flatties are after you ! Come with me ! Quick !"

The murderer needed no second warning. With a terrific oath he sprang up and followed his little guide in the direction of the East River. When South Street was reached, Mr. Slack was brought to a sudden stand by a savage tug at his coat-collar, administered by the great hand of the man he was piloting.

"Now yer see here !" growled the felon. "I don't go no furder till I twig where yer're aimin' fur. How d'yer know the flats war comin' ?"

"Don't hold me, don't hold me !" articulated Mr. Slack between his gasps. "There ain't a moment to lose ! They're onto you and the lawyer. I met them on the way to The Pocket, and heard them say and declare that you and Hardangle were a precious pair. They may be at The Pocket this minute. I must take a car and put him on his guard. There's not a second to waste. When they don't find you, it's more than likely that they'll hunt up your partner. Hide yourself, Shadow, or you're cooked. There : let loose. If all this comes to nothing, remember that I warned you out of kindness, and let's forget the past."

Shadow having relaxed his hold, Mr. Slack broke loose as he finished speaking, and dashed away for a car. The three miles that intervened between him and the lawyer seemed to lengthen into five or six before his journey was half completed. In reality, the trip was made in very good time, and in due season the little man was standing upon the lawyer's door-step. Molly answered his importunate summons.

"Well ?" she disdainfully demanded.

Mr. Slack waited not to offer explanations or to parley with the housekeeper. He brushed past her and, quite unannounced, burst into the library. The man of law looked up startled from his evening paper to behold before him the man whose continued presence in the world was one of his most fruitful sources of mental disquietude.

"The flatties, the flatties!" cried Mr. Slack, speaking excitedly and rapidly. "I don't know for certain, but I fear they're onto your whole secret. I heard them talking about you and Shadow——"

"God!" exclaimed the lawyer, jumping to his feet. "Go on, man!"

"I heard Mr. Sargeant putting your two names together less than an hour ago. I could catch no more, but that was enough. They're rummaging in a saloon for Shadow now. But they won't find him, because I warned him and got him out. I may be mistaken and in error, but I fear their next step will be to come here. You must fly or hide! They might come any minute!"

"Curse them!" cried the lawyer. "Damn the hellish brood! Who are they, to lay hands on Jeremiah Hardangle! Let them come, I say! They'll find him no gutter-sot to dodge their clubs. I'll have the lights put out till I'm ready for them. Turn this one out and stay where you are."

Lawyer Hardangle strode from the room as he spoke and hurried down to his housekeeper, turning out the gas in the hall on his way.

"Molly," he said, "you've got my will. In a year's time you'll be my wife. There's a mean game on to-night: you must do your part. It is this: Pull down all your curtains so that a dark-lantern could not throw its beams in and discover you from outside. Lock every window and all the doors. Then turn out the gas—don't let a ray be visible—and after that make not an unnecessary sound. I want them to think there's not a soul in the house. See to this immediately and afterwards keep your chair until

I come to you. When I return I shall look like another man: don't cry out. I have no time for explanations. Will you do what I've requested? Will you stand by your old employer and future husband?"

"I'd be an ungrateful thing if I wouldn't!" returned Molly, with no uncertain sound, though considerably agitated by the sudden turn of affairs. "I'll have it all attended to in a jerk, sir."

"I knew you would," said the lawyer. "And now, Moll, where's your night-candle?"

In a twinkling the candle was brought from its shelf in the kitchen. Lawyer Hardangle was just ascending with it, when a crashing knock at the upper street-door struck a horrid chill to his heart, almost causing him to drop the candlestick from his fingers, so unexpected and frightful was the shock. He immediately recovered himself, however, and crept slowly up in the darkness to the landing. Bang, bang, bang! Again the thundering pounding at the door echoed dismally through the silent house. This time it was followed by a loud, gruff voice.

"Open that door, blast yer!" it roared. "I'll batter it in fur yer, if yer don't!"

It was Shadow. What an inexpressible relief to the lawyer, who had confidently expected a few more blows to demolish the panelling and reveal the determined features of detective Sargeant and his colleague. Calling down to his housekeeper that the man outside was a friend, he hastened to the door and opened it.

"Curse yer!" growled the hunted murderer. "Will yer git a man into a hole and then keep him standin' at yer blasted doors till he's nabbed! Show a glim, yer murderin' sneak!"

"There's not a single light in the house by this time," replied the lawyer, as he hurried the desperate felon into the hall and bolted the door after him. "The devilish hounds will miss their scent if they come before I'm ready for them."

"If you fly," here interrupted Mr. Slack, "it's all up

with you. Your flight will be proof against you. Think and consider that there may now be no evidence."

"I won't fly a step till I've found out!" answered the lawyer. "If I fly of course I'm an outcast the rest of my life. Do you suppose I didn't think of that long ago? And now we must act quickly."

"A moment of time!" cried Mr. Slack. "I have been kind to you to-night. I beg you not to forget it. If you are forced and compelled to fly, you will need some one about here to look after your affairs—to draw money for you (though it would be very dangerous), and to keep you informed of the state of affairs here. I have been kind: let me be your agent."

"Yer little pigeon-livered leech!" cried Shadow, enraged at the delay. "I'd squeeze the breath outen yer fur jest two cents. Shet yer head about yer cussed dust when they're after a man's life, or I'll fix yer yet!"

"Your pay shall be continued the same as ever," said the man of law, for considerations of policy refraining from cursing the man for his untimely cupidity. "But my money is so arranged that I shall not need your services even if I am forced to fly. Do you suppose I hadn't laid my account with the impossibility of a felon keeping a bank-account? But you shall have your pay in return for this warning. So let us have no more about that: every moment is precious."

"Let me out then, and I will go," rejoined Mr. Slack, having thus done all he could to secure his fortunes, and having no notion of remaining with such company under such circumstances. "I can be of service to you, perhaps, outside."

"Yer little devil!" cried Shadow. "Yer 'll go, will yer? Yer'll stay where yer are, or I'll slit yer neck. There's more nor one kind of use yer could be outside. Yer'll go when I go and yer won't go a dashed bit before!"

"But I warned you!" cried Mr. Slack, alarmed at the prospect. "It ain't likely——"

"Shet yer head, I say!" ordered the murderer, and

Mr. Slack complied. "And now, lawyer," Shadow continued, "if we must act quick, and it ain't skip, what's the game?"

"I'll tell you the plan I have," rejoined the lawyer quietly but rapidly. "But first, follow me upstairs and I'll show you a little place I've prepared for just some such a fix as this. Then you can catch my meaning better."

"To Hell with goin' upstairs!" snarled the murderer. "We'll be caught like rats in a trap."

The lawyer paid no heed to this strong demurrer, but bidding the two men follow him he led the way up the dark stairs. Arrived in the bedroom, he unlocked his secret closet and guiding them both into it, closed the door and lighted the candle.

"Now," he said, "for the plan. There isn't a safer spot in the house than this. You see that trap over your head? A man can stand on those handles, throw back those bolts, and climb into the attic overhead. Just to the right of the trap, he will find the skylight. Opening this he will stand upon the roof of the house. From the roof to the ground is a fire-escape which I had put there for the very purpose. Descending by this he will stand in my back-yard, and then he has the choice of several ways to the open street. Now, I propose that you two shall remain quiet and hidden in this closet. I shall disguise myself in the old rags which are in that drawer, light the gas in the hall and below stairs as usual, send Molly up to her room, and tell them, if they come, that she's getting ready to go out with me. I'll masquerade as her beau and, if possible, learn their business and get at how much they know. They of course will not be in the least suspicious of my personality, inasmuch as they will be certain that Lawyer Hardangle can have no intimation of danger. You, Shadow, will be perfectly safe here, and when they are gone I will return to you and report developments. Till then you will move at the peril of your lives. Curse that boot!"

This last exclamation was addressed to one of the articles of his incognito which went on with difficulty. For as he had been speaking, Mr. Hardangle had unlocked the drawer in which his "slum-garments" were kept, and worked eagerly at the process of transforming himself into Joe Collins. When he had finished the revelation of his plan, Shadow exclaimed :

"It's a go, lawyer! Blast the bloody dogs!"

Mr. Slack, feeling called upon to offer some remark, observed faintly, while he trembled in every nerve :

"It's a go, Mr. Hardangle. Pray recollect and remember that I have been kind."

The lawyer's disguise was soon complete. Concealing his legal attire in Joe Collins's drawer, and cautioning Shadow to extinguish the candle if it seemed likely to burn out before his return, he put his revolver into his pocket, and inquired of the murderer whether he had any weapons about him. For an answer Shadow pulled from his pocket his evil-bladed clasp-knife. Mr. Slack visibly shuddered as the thought of remaining alone in such confined quarters with the owner of the knife presented itself to his startled imagination. No notice, however, was taken of him in the press of weightier matters, and Mr. Hardangle, placing the key of the closet in the murderer's hand, hurried down to his housekeeper, lighting the gas on the way.

Surely that cannot have been a man's face that peered over the banister-railing at him as he did it!

"Now, Molly," said the lawyer, "I'm ready for them and am going to make a light. You'll discover that I look like a veritable house-breaker the minute I do, and I sha'n't detain you in such company, my dear (I suppose I can say that now). You've done your part well and faithfully. It is my present wish that you take another candle and retire for the night. Please do so as quickly as you can. I do not desire that you should be forced to witness any such unpleasant scenes as may occur."

"Mercy!" cried Mrs. Humstone, as the man of law

put a match to the gas-jet. "Have mercy on us! Is that really you, Mr. Hardangle? What is going to happen, sir?"

"There, now, Moll," remonstrated the lawyer. "I asked you to make haste."

The good widow obeyed with all possible dispatch, and in a minute's time had said good-night and started for her room on the third floor, her heart a strange medley of the joy of love, the pain of curiosity, and the agitation of dread. She said to herself as she locked her bedroom door:

"These are strange goings-on. I wonder where those other fellows are, and what it all means. I didn't hear them go out."

Lawyer Hardangle, in full accord with his nature, was in magnificent self-control that night. The hazardous ordeal through which he expected to pass caused his heart to quicken its action by not a single pulsation. Jeremiah Hardangle, in spite of his total moral depravity, was a man to challenge and enslave admiration. Cool, intrepid, far-sighted and self-reliant, he was made of the stuff of which heroes are made; self-centred and conscious of power, he was a born leader of men. As he sat there calmly awaiting the trying exigency before him, there was something almost sublime in his display of personal power and self-mastery. His housekeeper had been locked in her room not more than five or ten minutes, when he heard the sound of climbing feet upon the stone steps leading to the front door, and a sturdy pull at the bell immediately followed. With the utmost deliberation he rose and opened the basement-door.

"Hey, you up there!" he called in a deep, rough voice. "She's up in her room a-dressin'. If you want to see the lawyer, he's gone out."

It was detective Sargeant and his colleague.

"Gone out, has he?" repeated the former. "Come down, Bullfinch, and we'll talk to this fellow a little. Who are you, any way, if I may inquire without offence?"

"No offence, gents, I'm sure," replied the lawyer in the same disguised voice. "I ain't one of them sort as gets easy ruffled. My name's Joe Collins, and I'm forty-eight years old gone Christmas."

By this time the detectives had entered and were regarding the bushy-whiskered Mr. Collins with searching eyes.

"Might I ask further what brings you here?" continued Mr. Sargeant. "You're so good-natured."

"I won't say how long my good-nature might last," returned the man of law. "There is such a thing as bein' too curious after other folks' biz. But I don't mind a-sayin' that I'm here a-sparkin' of the lawyer's housekeeper, and that she's gone upstairs to dress, as we're goin' for a airin'. You're the second fellers as has come here since he went out. I'm glad Moll (that's her name, gents) wasn't here alone to do the handsome for the first one. He was a tearer, gents, a holy smoker!"

At this juncture detective Sargeant stole a sly, knowing wink upon detective Bullfinch, as one who would say: "Here's a greeny giving away useful information gratis. We know who he was."

"A tough customer, was he, pop?" he observed. "Tall, wasn't he?"

"Tall? What made you think so?" returned the lawyer.

"Oh, I had an idea he was. I'm a pretty good guesser, you see."

"No, I don't see no such thing," retorted the man of law. "This here chap wasn't particular tough, and he was most particular small. You took a wrong meaning out of my words, gents. All I meant was a little funnin'. He gabbed away so like a crazy poll-parrot, that I was afeared he'd talk the woman blind and deaf. He said his name was Mr. Silas Slack: them was his exact words."

"I suppose he was like most gas-bags," remarked Mr. Sargeant, looking somewhat crestfallen, "all wind and chaff."

"Mostly, gents. He seemed a good deal in, and he

allowed he was hopin' to find the lawyer out, because he was minded to give my Moll a good dressin' down for havin' got better into Mr. Hardangle's favor than he, particular as he'd been in his office all his days. Them was his words, gents. Say, gents, let me have a look at your shoes. Well, now, I allowed as you had a knowin', bossy way with you, and them thick soles jest gives it all away. I say : are you fellers flatties?"

Detective Sargeant was about to reply when, without the slightest warning, the door into the lower hall opened, and to the lawyer's appalling amazement a man's voice shouted :

"That's the lawyer, Sargeant! He's gaming you! I got in without any trouble and I've heard the whole thing! Shadow and Slack are in his bedroom Round the table there, Bullfinch! I'll stop his way upstairs!"

So far from being paralyzed, or petrified into abject helplessness by this frightful apparition, Lawyer Hardangle grasped the whole situation at a glance. Quick as thought he seized his revolver and fired full into the face of the new-comer. The bullet merely grazed the man's cheek; but, in the confusion that followed, the lawyer sprang towards the door. Throwing the detective to the floor by the desperation of his onslaught and the sheer weight of his powerful frame, he was at the top of the stairs before any of the three men had sufficiently recovered themselves to give chase. On into his bedroom he dashed, slipping both bolts into place behind him.

"The door, Shadow!" he cried. "Open the door, for God's sake! The game is up! There was a flatty concealed in the house! Up through the trap for your life!"

The door was opened before the words were half out of the lawyer's mouth, and by the time he had ceased speaking, the murderer, with a muttered curse, had thrown back the bolts in the ceiling and was lifting himself to the floor above. Bang, bang, bang! The detectives were kicking down the door.

"Hurry in the name of the devil!" shouted the lawyer,

But the desperate villain was already pushing up the skylight and making his escape to the roof. Bang, bang, bang—*crash!* The door had yielded to the officers' kicks and the impact of their shoulders hurled against it. The lawyer bolted the closet-door and sprang for the trap. He thought of his cash-box, but dared not take time to secure it. Mr. Slack was nowhere to be seen. In a twinkling the partners in blood stood together upon the flat roof.

"Where's the escape?" asked Shadow.

"This way—in the middle of the rear! Be careful!"

The burly felon sprang towards the edge of the roof, and peered down into the darkness below.

"Curse this dark!" he growled. "What's that? There's some one creepin' around at the foot!"

"By God!" exclaimed the lawyer. "The sneak has heard that too! They're banging away at the closet-door, and calling on us to give ourselves up! What's to be done?"

"Try a shot at him below!" hissed Shadow. "Quick! They're murderin' the door to splinters!"

The lawyer leaned over the roof and fired at a dim object in the darkness below. The lead blunted itself on the pavement.

"What's that?" cried a voice from a second-story window of the house on the right.

"It's murder!" yelled the lawyer. "Put your head back or you'll get one, too!"

"Fire! Murder!" screamed a woman from the house on the left.

"Damn it! there's two more fellows come round from the sidewalk!" muttered the lawyer, still peering down into the dark. "The whole neighborhood will be aroused, and then we're cornered! I say, man, what's to be done?"

"Slam away at that flat again!" mouthed Shadow.

"I can't. He's under cover of the escape. God! there goes the door! I tell you we haven't a second to lose! What's to be done?"

"Curse yer!" hissed the murderer, "*that's* what's to be done fur yer!"

Shadow gave the lawyer an infuriated push as he spoke, and with a fearful oath sent him headlong into the yard below. The crushed and bloody corpse had not ceased to quiver on its stony bed, when the hunted murderer, knowing that all escape was hopeless, drew his case-knife, severed his jugular vein, cut a deep slash across both wrists, and hurled the streaming knife into the street. In another instant the two detectives cautiously pushed open the skylight and demanded the surrender of the lawyer and his confederate.

"He's surrendered, yer cursed hounds!" rejoined Shadow. "And if yer wants to ketch me, yer better not be so skeered of yer blasted lives. Come on, I say!"

The detectives did so, and Mr. Sargeant was approaching to handcuff his prisoner, when his foot slipped on the tin roof.

"What's that?" he cried.

"It's blood, yer hell-dog!" replied the murderer.

"Where is he? Did you kill him?"

"Yes, I did him, and served him right fur getting me into this muss. We'll die even. But that ain't his juice, yer fool. That's mine. I shoved him over the edge."

"We must stop this bleeding, Bullfinch. He'll cheat the gallows at this rate."

"No, yer won't stop this bleedin'! It can't be done. I've made a good job of it, yer sneaks. If yer try monkeyin' with me I'll only slam around and croak the sooner. Oh, yer don't git no wictims to-night out of this racket."

The sickening quantity of blood which was streaming on the roof convinced the officers of the truth of the man's words. They therefore called down to their coadjutor to learn where the lawyer had fallen and if he were already dead, and then devoted themselves to extracting from the dying murderer information concerning Reginald Moreland's disappearance, which none other than he could now furnish.

"Tell yer that?" said Shadow. "Since yer warn't keen enough to find it out yourselves, I will. That Hardangle devil was after the t'other one's cash, so he forges a will. That little Slack fool can tell yer about that. Well, he finds out somehow about Bags an' me, and one night, nigh onto The Pocket, he ketches us alone, and we makes it up fur five hundred a head, to get into our cops' duds and ride the t'other one out in our boat and sink him. The lawyer, he war to get the Moreland one down into Water Street on some hoax or other, and Bags and me war to come acrost them and pass off fur cops and steer him into our den in South Street and tie him up there and put a stopper in his mug, and then slip him into our boat. And that's what we done. The poor sucker grabbed Bags as we war flingin' him over and they were done together. Ugh! the runnin' of that water haunts me now!"

"And that was all?" inquired detective Sargeant.

"That war the hull. Curse me, but I feel queer and shaky! Except that afore he went over he allowed that there war somethin' weighty in the lookin'-glass in his bedroom."

"What!" cried both detectives at once. "Say that again!"

"I've done it wunst and that's enough. I tell yer I feel hellish played. I'll lay back. Damn me! If I hadn't got into that blasted job, I wouldn't have been brung to this. Curse that water, it haunts me! I kin feel it runnin' with my blood!"

Silence fell over the tragic scene as the murderer's life slowly ebbed away. He said not another word till the end was upon him. Then he weakly muttered:

"*Curse that water! It's drownin' me!*"

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### JOE MORELAND.

THE night after the appalling events narrated in the last chapter had taken place, Florence Moreland was sitting in her library deeply absorbed in thought. Her face was pale, and its anxious, tired look revealed all too plainly the days and nights of harrowing grief and bitterness which it had been her lot to endure. In addition to the weight of woes already pressing upon her heart, the events of the preceding night which she had learned an hour after their occurrence afforded fresh food for painfullest reflection. Mr. Slack had been dragged from his hiding-place under the lawyer's bed (whither he had darted the moment Shadow had opened the closet-door for his pursued confederate) and immediately escorted to the Moreland home by detective Sargeant. Here, with long-drawn words and swelling self-importance he had imparted his entire knowledge respecting the actors in this sorrowful tragedy; thus, with the help of the officer's account of Shadow's dying confession, clearing up the whole mystery, disclosing Lawyer Hardangle's cruel perfidy and Rachel Underwood's falsification concerning both the sex and the fate of her offspring. The weighty "something" of which Shadow had told with his fleeting breath, had been discovered in its strange hiding-place and proved to be nothing less than Reginald Moreland's last will and testament revoking all other documents. It was in Mr. Moreland's own handwriting. It bore a date only two days later than the forged will, and had been witnessed by the same individuals, who undoubtedly had been pledged to secrecy regarding its existence. Procrastination and the unexpected character of his death must have thwarted the

testator's purpose of sharing his secret with other parties after the death of the witnesses. The forged document had evidently been reproduced from a prior true testament, afterwards destroyed by the lawyer, inasmuch as the final document was for the most part identical with it. This prior testament not improbably had been drawn, among other purposes, that the testator might utilize it as a legal model in his own work. The whole affair was the outcome of a strange whim on the part of a man remarkable for his peculiarities.

The will set forth that the testator had learned from Rachel Underwood the true state of the case between her and his son, and ordered that the interest of $25,000 should yearly be paid to her child should such child live. Should no living child be born, or at the expiration of the term of its natural life, the principal was devoted to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Jeremiah Hardangle received $5,000. As no one would be wronged by so doing, it had been decided to hush the whole matter of the forgery, and obtain the sum which the lawyer had fraudulently secured only if it could be done quietly. After Mr. Sargeant and his little charge had gone, Florence had announced her unalterable decision to rear the child with her own, and it was the thought that her husband might at any moment return with Joe boy after a day spent in investigating the lawyer's affairs and in a visit to the morgue to look upon his father's murderer, that now aroused her from her profound abstraction. She raised her head and called to her little boy.

"Rex, my dear," she said, "come here a little while. I want to talk to you. I think papa may bring you a brother to-night. Will you love him and let him play with your things?"

"He'll be too little and cryey to play with my toys, mamma."

"No, love, he will be older than you. He isn't a little boy any more."

"Isn't that funny! Where will pàpa get him from—From Dr. Bedlow's?"

"No, Rex; he's been living with some other people that you don't know, but now he's going to live with you."

"Why hasn't he been with me sooner? Oh, won't it be jolly to have him here to play horse and all sorts of games with! Why didn't he be here before, mamma? Is he my real brother for good and all?"

"Yes, darling, you will call him brother Joe. It's been best for him to live somewhere else until now. Rose knows him."

"She does?"

"Yes; and you do, too."

"Why, mamma!"

"Think, now: did you ever hear Rose talk about a little boy called Joe boy?"

"Oh, mamma, not Joe boy—not that poor boy!"

"Yes, Rex, Rose's Joe boy."

"Then how can he be my brother?"

"By papa and mamma taking him for their little boy. And you will love each other and have such good times There, dear, you can go and play now."

Little Rex had again been absorbed in his game, and his mother in her thoughts, for about ten minutes, when Robert Moreland, looking no less pale and wearied than his wife, entered the house with Joe boy.

"Well, my boy," said Florence with a strange, mingled emotion seizing her heart, which she could by no means have dissected or interpreted, "you are very welcome to your new home. This is my little boy, Rex, who is to be your brother—your Miss Rose's nephew. You'll love each other and have such a good time. Don't you think you'll like it here?"

"I guess I will, ma'am," returned Joe boy somewhat shyly, owing to the magnificence of his surroundings, and regarding Rex with that peculiar expression which two strange children always bestow upon each other, "I guess I will, ma'am. But I liked mamma Sidgwick, and she

cried to have me come. I wonder if my mammy felt this, too."

"Did your good old mammy used to feel the good things that came to you?" asked Florence, who knew to whom the boy referred from Mr. Slack's description.

"Yes, ma'am," answered Joe. "She felt it just before I went to Mr. Maitland's school, and she felt that I was to be a fine, good man. I guess I'm going to be now. Does Miss Rose ever come here?"

"Yes, dear, she comes here very often."

"And will I see her if she does?"

"Yes, you and Rex and she can all have a good time together—I hope. And now you and Rex play in the corner while your new papa and mamma talk a little."

After the little fellows had made friends and were busily engaged in their play, Florence and Robert, for the last time that we shall see them, took their accustomed evening chairs.

"Oh, Florence, Florence!" groaned Robert, "it is awful! To see you kiss that child and hear you talk to him so, bows me to the dust. Oh, my wife, my wife!"

"You must overcome that feeling, Robert. Let us not talk about it. Did you attend the lawyer's funeral?"

"Yes, and it was pitiful! Not a mourner there unless the good housekeeper was an exception, and she had an old cat that she declared felt as bad. The woman was really much affected, and seems to have been truly attached to the villain. It was an unspeakably chilling and awful occasion. To hear the words of the service pronounced over the mangled form of that man but yesterday undoubted and full of power, made the blood run cold. How many times I thought of your unaccountable aversion to him. Your feeling is easily explicable now. Oh, Florence, Florence, these days have been terrible, terrible, terrible!"

"Let us not speak of them, Robert. What did you find out about the poor wretch's property? Did he leave a will?"

"Yes, and gave every cent to his housekeeper. There are none but distant relatives, and not one of them was remembered. He had thousands of dollars locked away in that closet which Sargeant told us about last night. The woman I found to be honest and well-meaning; and, as she intends among other things to give a round sum to Philip's Hall, bring the former cabman and his wife to live with her, and remember all rightful heirs, I concluded not to say a word about the forgery."

"Mr. Slack felt that he ought to receive something for the knowledge which he imparted last night: did you do anything for him?"

"He deserves nothing so well as imprisonment. But neither do I, and I have decided to give him a chance at the store, putting him on his good behavior. We should of course never have known about the boy without him. But what do you think? It came to me to-day why Rachel falsified to me concerning the child. Her account of her intended revenge was all false. Otherwise, why should she have hidden the child's continued existence from me? I believe, from what Mr. Sidgwick told me——"

"Excuse me, dear. I forgot to ask about him. How did you get Joe away from him?"

"I was forced to take him into my confidence. He is a good fellow and will keep it quiet. Oh, my wife, my wife, how can I talk to you about such things in this business-like way! Why do you not hate me—hate me!"

"Robert, you must not. See: the children were attracted by your exclamation. What about Rachel's design?"

"I was about to say that from what the teacher told me, taken in connection with her deception and her secret way of sending the child money, I believe Rachel twice called at Phil's office when Rose and Joe were there alone. On both of these occasions she spoke of the purpose of the lady who was supporting Joe, to make him one day a rich man. And, on the former one she hinted to Rose and Joe that they might one day be falling in love. Now from

all this what is my conclusion? Nothing less than that it was Rachel's scheme one day to marry them if it were within her power, both to be revenged on you and that she might use the new and tremendous lever which would thus be hers in forcing me away from you."

"Robert!"

"I am well convinced that she had no other notion, and that her former pretended revelation was gotten up for the occasion. Such a course, too, would have laid her open to imprisonment. The note that she sent me also proves that she had not expected me to expose myself. Oh, my wife, she is dead, dead! and I, it was I who killed her!"

"Hush, my husband. I dare not think of that more. God has forgiven you: I will think only of that. You have been punished, punished fearfully. May God grant that the punishment of further exposure may be spared you. Shall you tell Phil, Robert?"

"You mean about the child? Yes, Florence, I shall. But we must hide it from the rest of the family if we can; and even then your mother and Madge will be scandalized at our taking a poor street Arab into our home. You told Joe that Rose and Rex and he could play together: I'm almost afraid she will be forbidden to come here any more. I think you felt the same from the manner in which you qualified your assertion."

"I had thought of it; I hope, however, that it will not be so bad as that. At any rate we must do our duty. Was anything new discovered concerning the buttons?"

"Nothing. The way in which one was lost in the office and so came into Slack's hands; and how the other one was found in Applegate's cab, can never positively be explained. Sargeant's theory is, in my opinion, the correct one. It is not unlikely that, having them in his pocket, he should have taken them out to speak to Hardangle about them and his Will, as he never tired of doing. Hardangle may have had them in his hands at the time of the cab's arrival, and so it is quite natural that father, having risen, should slip them into his pantaloons-pocket.

A hole in this pocket through which one of the buttons found its way under the lawyer's desk and the other one into the cab, completes the conjecture, which, you see, is substantially the same one he offered last evening. I think it satisfactory."

"It seems at least natural. Oh, Robert, was it only yesterday morning that you took the button to Mr. Sargeant? It seems so much longer. What a dreadful and unexpected punishment your father had in store for you. I have been thinking of it to-day, and it seemed almost cruel, though very like him, too. Mr. Slack said it was your father's intention to give the promised money to Rachel and the child himself as long as he lived, did he not?"

"I think he did. Yes, it does almost seem cruel, Florence, and yet how small would the penalty of sudden exposure to you and others have been, compared with what I deserved. Oh, Florence, my wife, I am wretched, wretched, wretched! My sins overwhelm me!"

For a reply Florence kissed her husband's brow. Then calling to the children, who were the best of friends by this time, that she heard the sand-man coming, she bade them follow her upstairs. As little Rex told his father good-night he whispered into his ear:

"Papa, do you know, I've been looking at brother Joe, and really and truly sometimes he makes me think of that pretty lady."

When the little fellows were snugly tucked into bed, and in a fair way of a cozy night's sleep, Florence returned to her place at her husband's side.

"Robert," she said, "It *has* been terrible. It will be long before the memory of these days will have been sufficiently softened by time to allow either of us to even think upon them calmly. In some respects our love can never be just what I once thought it was. There must ever be a cruel scar where the fierce blow fell. And yet, and yet, my husband, if it has felt the wounds of the battle, thank God it is also battle-tried. My Robert, my own,

love *is* self-realization, and I love you with a deep and holy love. There is the bell."

It was Philip Maitland. He had heard of Mr. Hardangle's tragic end, but of all the strange circumstances connected therewith, he was quite ignorant. After Robert, with great agitation, had told him, he immediately arose.

"I cannot force myself upon you at such a time," he said with trembling voice. "It is too sacred. Let me quote to you four well-known lines and I will go.

> "O, yet we trust that somehow good
> Will be the final goal of ill,
> To pangs of nature, sins of will,
> Defects of doubt and taints of blood."

So saying Philip Maitland took his departure, and as he went the benediction which always followed his presence, rested upon his loved ones.

THE END.

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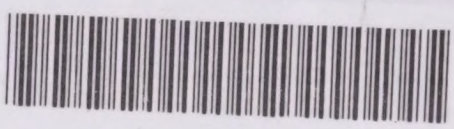

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